

THE IMPACT OF BREXIT ON NORTHERN IRELAND

A FRAMING ANALYSIS OF SPEECHES AND STATEMENTS BY
NORTHERN IRISH POLITICIANS

Aantal woorden: 17 544

Zarah Bellefroid

Studentennummer: 01302366

Promotor(en): Dhr. David Chan

Masterproef voorgelegd voor het behalen van de graad master in de Meertalige Communicatie:
Nederlands, Engels, Frans

Academiejaar: 2017 – 2018

THE IMPACT OF BREXIT ON NORTHERN IRELAND

A FRAMING ANALYSIS OF SPEECHES AND STATEMENTS BY
NORTHERN IRISH POLITICIANS

Aantal woorden: 17 544

Zarah Bellefroid

Studentennummer: 01302366

Promotor(en): Dhr. David Chan

Masterproef voorgelegd voor het behalen van de graad master in de Meertalige Communicatie:
Nederlands, Engels, Frans

Academiejaar: 2017 – 2018

Verklaring i.v.m. auteursrecht

De auteur en de promotor(en) geven de toelating deze studie als geheel voor consultatie beschikbaar te stellen voor persoonlijk gebruik. Elk ander gebruik valt onder de beperkingen van het auteursrecht, in het bijzonder met betrekking tot de verplichting de bron uitdrukkelijk te vermelden bij het aanhalen van gegevens uit deze studie.

Acknowledgements

This master's thesis marks the culmination of my academic journey at the University of Ghent, Department of Translation, Interpreting and Communication. I would like to express my deepest appreciation to the people who have helped me create this dissertation.

Firstly, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my promotor Mr. Chan. His excellent guidance and encouragement throughout this writing process were of inestimable value. I am thankful for his useful feedback which gave me new insights and enabled me to look at my thesis from a different perspective. Moreover, Mr. Chan taught me the importance of being critical of your own work.

On a more personal note, I am grateful for my parents' unconditional support and unremitting encouragement throughout the past five years at university. They continued to believe in me at times when I had lost faith in myself.

Lastly, I would like to thank my brother Tom for proofreading parts of this master's thesis. As an older brother, he also set me the example of what it takes to successfully obtain a master's degree.

Table of contents

List of figures.....	5
Abstract	6
(249 words).....	6
Introduction.....	7
1. The history of Northern Ireland: a troubled past	11
1.1 Ireland before 1916.....	11
1.1.1 Henry VIII and the English Reformation	11
1.1.2 The Act of Union 1800.....	11
1.1.3 The Great Famine 1845.....	12
1.1.4 Home-Rule Bill.....	12
1.1.5 The Ulster Volunteer Force and the Irish Volunteers	13
1.2 Easter Rising 1916.....	13
1.3 Anglo-Irish Treaty leads to Irish Free State in 1922.....	14
1.3.1 Anglo-Irish War.....	14
1.3.2 The Irish Civil War.....	15
1.4 The Troubles.....	16
1.4.1 The conflict	16
1.4.2 Bloody Sunday.....	17
1.4.3 Hunger Strike.....	17
1.5 The Irish peace process.....	18
1.5.1 The Anglo-Irish Agreement.....	18
1.5.2 Rapprochement between political parties	18
1.5.3 Downing Street Declaration.....	19
1.5.4 Sinn Féin: a new interlocutor in the negotiations.....	19
1.5.5 The Good Friday Agreement.....	19
1.5.6 Difficulties surrounding The Good Friday Agreement	20
2. Brexit.....	21
2.1 The UK and the European Union: a complicated relationship.....	21
2.2 Brexit negotiations.....	23
2.3 The impact of Brexit on Northern Ireland	24
2.3.1 The Irish border issue.....	24
3. Methodology	26
3.1 Corpus.....	26
3.2 Methodology.....	29
3.2.1 Theoretical background.....	29
3.2.2 Analysis.....	30
4. Results.....	36
Frame 1: Majority of Northern Ireland voted to remain.....	39
Frame 2.1: unity within Northern Ireland.....	40

<i>Frame 2.2: unity between UK and Northern Ireland</i>	41
<i>Frame 2.3: unity between the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland</i>	42
<i>Frame 2.4: unity between the UK and the European Union</i>	42
<i>Frame 2.5: unity between the UK and the Republic of Ireland</i>	42
<i>Frame 3: The Good Friday Agreement is in danger</i>	43
<i>Frame 4.1: acceptable/preferable hard border</i>	43
<i>Frame 4.2: acceptable/preferable soft border</i>	44
<i>Frame 5: acceptable/preferable special status for Northern Ireland</i>	44
5. Discussion	46
<i>Frame 1: majority of Northern Ireland voted to remain</i>	46
<i>Frame 2.1: unity within Northern Ireland</i>	49
<i>Frame 2.2: unity between the UK and Northern Ireland</i>	49
<i>Frame 2.3: unity between the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland</i>	51
<i>Frame 2.4: unity between the UK and the European Union</i>	52
<i>Frame 2.5: unity between the UK and the Republic of Ireland</i>	52
<i>Frame 3: The Good Friday Agreement is in danger</i>	53
<i>Frame 4.1: acceptable/preferable hard border</i>	53
<i>Frame 4.2: acceptable/preferable soft border</i>	54
<i>Frame 5: acceptable/preferable special status for Northern Ireland</i>	55
Conclusion	57
Bibliography	59
Appendix	66

List of figures

In text

- Fig. 1: ratio between frames.....	36
- Fig. 2: nationalists: ratio between frames.....	38
- Fig. 3: unionists: ratio between frames.....	39
- Fig.4: 1b: unionists.....	40
- Fig. 5: 2.1a: unionists.....	40
- Fig. 6: 2.2a: unionists.....	41
- Fig 7: 2.2b: nationalists.....	41
- Fig. 8: 2.3a: nationalists.....	42
- Fig. 9: 2.5a: unionists.....	43
- Fig 10: 4.1b: nationalists.....	43
- Fig. 11: 4.2a: unionists.....	44
- Fig. 12: 5b: unionists.....	45

In appendix

- Fig. A1: 1a: nationalists	
- Fig. A2: 2.1a: nationalists	
- Fig. A3: 2.3a: unionists	
- Fig. A4: 2.3b: unionists	
- Fig. A5: 2.4a: nationalists	
- Fig. A6: 2.4b: unionists	
- Fig. A7: 2.5a: nationalists	
- Fig. A8: 3.a: nationalists	
- Fig. A9: 3.a: unionists	
- Fig. A10: 4.1b: unionists	

Abstract

This dissertation focuses on how Northern Irish politicians voice their opinion concerning the impact of Brexit on Northern Ireland. A corpus was compiled out of 21 speeches that were delivered within a time frame of 22 months by politicians of the four main political parties in Northern Ireland: Sinn Féin (SF), the Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP), the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) and the Ulster Unionist Party (UUP).

This research made use of the “Framing” method, which is described as followed: “Framing theory suggests that how something is presented to the audience (called “the frame”) influences the choices people make about how to process that information” (Arowolo, 2017, p. 1). Ten frames were established across the corpus. Subsequently, a number of text fragments were derived that either emphasised or de-emphasised one of the frames. The numeric values of these categories are explained in the quantitative research, the qualitative chapter shows the reasoning behind it.

This thesis clarifies that the idea of a soft border remains a topic of discussion. Nevertheless, the hard border concept is rejected by all parties. Moreover, the unity within Northern Ireland is believed to be bound to the preservation of the Good Friday Agreement following Brexit. The overall research demonstrates that the Northern Irish politicians’ argumentation always amount to one topic: Northern Island’s position within the UK after Brexit. Whereas nationalists advocate for a unification between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, unionists see Northern Ireland as an intrinsic part of the UK.

(249 words)

Introduction

Thursday 23 June 2016 heralded the beginning of a new chapter in the United Kingdom's colourful history. On that remarkable day, 52 % of the British population ticked the leave-box on their ballot paper (Hunt & Wheeler, 2018). The outcome of the EU-referendum was clear: a majority in the UK was ready to cut ties with the European Union. It is set to be the first member state to voluntarily leave the Union (Nationalia, 2016) since the "Lisbon treaty" (Panizza, 2018) was adopted in 2009.

To many people in the United Kingdom and Europe, the referendum result came as a shock because it was a scenario they had never anticipated. The day after the referendum, the deep-rooted conflicting views on the matter were made clear once more in the media coverage. Whereas some British and international newspapers –*The Times*, *The Daily Mirror*, *The New York Times*– focused on the uncertainty surrounding a post-Brexit UK, other British papers such as *The Daily Express* and *The Daily Mail* applauded the Eurosceptic narrow victory (Paelinck, 2016).

Shortly before the referendum, 30% of the eligible voters in the UK were still undecided on which course their country should follow in the upcoming years (Helm, 2016). They were referred to as the so-called "floating voters" (BBC News, 2016b). However, the outcome cannot be ascribed to a sudden radical shift in the British mindset. According to Herman Van Rompuy, former President of the European Council, the Euroscepticism that prevailed in British society leading up to the referendum stemmed from several economic and social topics that had been prominent points of discussion for many years (De Roy, 2016).

Following the disappointing EU-referendum results, David Cameron stepped down as Prime Minister of the UK. The former Home Secretary Theresa May was appointed the nation's highest function, in order to prepare the country for its departure from the European Union on 29 March 2019 (Hunt & Wheeler, 2018).

During the campaign prior to 23 June, Eurosceptic parties such as the U.K. Independence Party (UKIP) reiterated the threat that immigration poses to British society. It was one of the key points of discussion leading up to the referendum (Wilkinson, 2016). However, as negotiations between the United Kingdom and the European Union commenced on 19 June 2017 (Hunt &

Wheeler, 2018), a different high-profile topic complicated the negotiating process: the future of Northern Ireland's position within the UK.

As part of the United Kingdom, Northern Ireland forms the geographical connection with the Republic of Ireland. However, the region's history has been marked by bloody conflicts and tensions during the 20th century. From 1968 onwards, the position of Northern Ireland was at stake in a conflict referred to as "The Troubles" (BBC History, 2018). Unionists wanted to guarantee Northern Ireland's membership to the United Kingdom whereas nationalists envisioned the reunification of Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. More than 3600 people lost their lives (BBC History, 2018). Eventually, the signing of "The Good Friday Agreement" (BBC History, 2018b) brought about peace on 10 April 1998.

However, the UK's decision to leave the EU has created several issues that specifically apply to Northern Ireland. Whatever the outcome of the negotiations, Northern Ireland will undoubtedly be affected in various aspects of life. Moreover, Brexit ¹might rekindle the debate on some deep-rooted topics in the region.

One of those negotiation points concerns the future characteristics of the border between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. It is not merely a geographical border, it also represents an important trade route from the UK to the EU and vice-versa. In order to avoid the implementation of customs checks, specific legislation would have to come into force (Morris, 2017). However, this option could result in political tensions between nationalists and unionists because the region would constitutionally differ from the rest of the United Kingdom (Torfs, 2017). Two decades after the ratification of the Good Friday Agreement, the constitutional status of Northern Ireland is once again a sensitive point of contention due to Brexit negotiations (Millar, 2018).

Although Northern Ireland is part of the United Kingdom, the country often portrays a strong identity. This was highlighted for example by the EU-referendum results. Although the 'Leave'-camp won the referendum for the whole of the UK, the voting pattern in Northern

¹ In this thesis, special attention is given to the term 'Brexit' and its corresponding register. When referring to the idea/issue/phenomenon, the term Brexit is used. Otherwise, expressions such as 'when the UK leaves the EU/withdraws from the EU' are preferred.

Ireland differed. Indeed, 56% of Northern Irish voters indicated that they wanted to maintain their EU-citizenship (BBC News, 2016).

The impact of Brexit on Northern Ireland is a high-profile topic in both British as international media coverage. The statements of members of the British government, in particular Theresa May's speeches, are meticulously analysed. Moreover, a great amount of attention is attributed to the discourse of EU-representatives who take part in the Brexit talks. These include for example Michel Barnier, the EU's Chief Brexit negotiator and Guy Verhofstadt, the EU parliament's lead negotiator for Brexit. However, the opinion of one important party is strikingly less reported on. In other words, a blind spot has manifested itself in the media coverage on the case of Northern Ireland. The Northern Irish population will undoubtedly feel the effects of Brexit, regardless of whether the outcome sees a special arrangement. During the preparation for this study, numerous British and international papers and news sites were scanned. Nevertheless, it became clear that the Northern Irish politicians' speeches and statements were noticeably less discussed in comparison to the ones previously mentioned. Consequently, a Northern Irish blind-spot could occur amongst the UK's population as the media gives relatively little attention to the Northern Irish context.

Moreover, this could indicate a certain degree of British disconnection with regard to Northern Ireland. In 2013, Emer O'Toole² touched on this matter in an opinion piece for *The Guardian*, following riots in the city of Belfast. According to O'Toole, Northern Ireland is often considered not to be an inherent part of the United Kingdom due to its turbulent history, marked by conflict (O'Toole, 2013).

However, it is important to attribute sufficient attention to the general opinion of Northern Irish politicians. If the Good Friday Agreement is preserved after the Brexit-negotiations, Northern Ireland will still be a full member of the United Kingdom. However, the two main political leanings have different views on the position of Northern Ireland following Brexit. Unionists support the scenario in which Northern Ireland remains an integral part of the United Kingdom. Nationalists want to be reunited with the Republic of Ireland (BBC News, 2012). Therefore, it is vital that the discourse of Northern Irish politicians is covered on sufficiently in both the British and international media.

² Assistant professor at Concordia University

Consequently, this master's thesis will try to formulate an answer to the following research question: 'How do Northern Irish politicians voice their opinion concerning the impact of Brexit on Northern Ireland?' A framing analysis will be performed on a corpus that comprises speeches and statements by politicians of the four main political parties in Northern Ireland: Sinn Féin (SF), The Democratic Unionist Party (DUP), The Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP) and The Ulster Unionist Party (UUP).

The first chapter of this thesis gives a concise overview of the historical key events that have shaped Northern Irish identity from the Tudor-period up until the signing of the Good Friday Agreement in 1998.

Brexit will not only change everyday life in the UK, it will also have an effect on countries' relationships across the globe. In order to understand the reason why a majority of British citizens voted "leave" on the 23 June 2016, it is pivotal to outline some of the key events that defined the complex relationship between the United Kingdom and the European Union. Consequently, chapter two briefly discusses the motivation for the EU-referendum as well as the different stages in the Brexit-negotiations. A significant part of this chapter is devoted to the implications of Brexit for Northern Ireland.

Chapter three introduces the theoretical framework concerning the methodology used for this research, namely framing. Two leading authorities in this field of study are Fairclough and Van Dijk. In addition, an explanation is provided in regard to the approach that was used to set up the corpus for this study. The selected frames and corresponding hypotheses are extensively reviewed at the end of this chapter.

Chapter four presents the quantitative results of the corpus-based study after analysing each frame separately. The most pertinent aspects of this analysis are used to discuss in great depth the content of the speeches and statements in chapter five.

We summarise the study and report on the findings in the final chapter: Conclusion. Moreover, notes on limitations of the study and ideas for further research are presented at the end of this chapter.

1. The history of Northern Ireland: a troubled past

The future of Northern Ireland's position within the United Kingdom has been a high-profile topic throughout the Brexit negotiations. Due to its geographical location and turbulent past, Northern Ireland has formed the connection between the Republic of Ireland and the United Kingdom over the past century. In order to understand the economic and social consequences for Northern Ireland when the United Kingdom breaks all ties with the European Union, it is of the utmost importance to trace back its history up until its founding.

1.1 Ireland before 1916

1.1.1. Henry VIII and the English Reformation

Religious tensions between Protestants and Catholics have left a profound mark on various aspects of Northern Irish history. Under the reign of Henry VIII (1509-1547) (Weir, 2011), Protestantism became the state religion in England and Ireland. In order to remarry and conceive a legitimate male heir, the King had wanted to have his first marriage annulled. The pope refused, after which Henry renounced papal supremacy (Rex, 2006). On 3 November 1534, Parliament officially appointed Henry VIII as the "Supreme Head of the Church of England" (Rex, 2006, p. 14). This period in English history is known as the "English Reformation" (Rex, 2006, p. 1).

1.1.2 The Act of Union 1800

Throughout the following centuries, Catholics were suppressed in the English Kingdom. Although the vast majority of the Irish population was Catholic (Fitzpatrick, 1812), a repressive English policy towards Catholics in Ireland was reflected by the instauration of "penal laws" (Fitzpatrick, 1812, p. 13). These laws were reduced in the 18th century. Ireland received more autonomy with the instauration of its own parliament in 1782 (Adelman & Byrne, 2017). The British government however, following several Irish nationalist uprisings, tightened its power again on Ireland.

One of the biggest rebellions was that led by Wolfe Tone and "The Society of United Irishmen" (Donnchadha, 2011) with the help of France in 1798. Two years later, the implementation of

“The Act of Union” (Adelman ³& Byrne, 2017) ended Irish autonomy. Ireland was completely incorporated into a Union with Britain: “The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland” (Adelman & Byrne, 2017)⁴.

1.1.3 The Great Famine 1845

Throughout the 19th century, a majority of the Irish population longed for independence. This dream of a free Ireland is often referred to as “The Irish question” (Adelman & Byrne, 2017)⁵. Discontent with British rule grew stronger after the “Great Famine” (CAIN, 2018) of 1845. Potatoes were the main source of nutrition for the poorer areas in Ireland. When the potato crop failed, a famine emerged in large parts of Ireland (Gráda, 2000). The British government failed to provide aid as the export from Ireland to Britain continued (Jennings, n.d.). The Great Famine pushed many Irish to emigrate to America (Gráda, 2000).

1.1.4 Home-Rule Bill

Since “The Act of Union”, a vast majority of the Irish was dissatisfied with their secondary position within the UK (Sax, 2018, p. 104). Therefore, the terms of a “Home-Rule Bill” (p.104) were discussed on numerous occasions. However, initiators not only encountered British opposition, but also from within Ireland itself as no general consensus was reached (Sax, 2018).

Proposals in 1886 and 1893 by the Liberal Party leader W.E. Gladstone (Adelman & Byrne, 2017) were unilaterally rejected by Britain. A third “Home-Rule Bill” (p.7) was on the verge of being passed, when people in Ulster, a province in the north of Ireland, interfered (Hagen, 2002). It is no coincidence that it was this community that took a stand against Irish independence. The population and background of Ulster differed widely from the rest of Ireland. Firstly, Protestantism took a central role in Ulster whereas the Irish were predominately Catholic. Secondly, whereas Irish society was mainly agricultural-based in the late 19th century, Ulster had developed into an industrialised region (Adelman & Byrne, 2017).

³ This is a source that was consulted online. Page numbers were not available to use as a reference.
Google-Books-ID: FuQqCgAAQBAJ

⁴ This is a source that was consulted online. Page numbers were not available to use as a reference.
Google-Books-ID: FuQqCgAAQBAJ

⁵ This is a source that was consulted online. Page numbers were not available to use as a reference.
Google-Books-ID: FuQqCgAAQBAJ

1.1.5 The Ulster Volunteer Force and the Irish Volunteers

In order to preserve Protestant domination, “the Ulster Volunteer Force” was set up (Hagen, 2002, p. 7). Shortly before World War I, a Home-Rule Bill was voted upon, but it was never put into force. (Adelman & Byrne, 2017). Tensions grew between the Ulster Volunteer Force and the Irish Nationalists, which led to the creation of a new counterpart movement: “The Irish Volunteers” (p.7). While the rivalry between these two movements died down due to concern for World War I, the radical ideology of another group grew stronger and more violent (Hagen, 2002). “The Irish Republican Brotherhood” (p. 7), founded in 1858, envisioned to evict England out of Ireland and reclaim the right to self-determination (Hagen, 2002).

1.2 Easter Rising 1916

On Easter Monday 24 April 1916, the Irish Republican Brotherhood and the Irish Volunteers rallied together to claim Irish independence. They occupied several public buildings in Dublin, the post office served as the heart of the uprising (Sax, 2018).

On the first day of the uprising, Patrick Pearse read out a declaration of independence that explained the reason for this rebellion. However, the British did not immediately take action. The Great War was in full swing which meant that the British army was focussed on the trenches rather than on Dublin (Ollevier, 2016).

Nevertheless, one week later, British military forces put down the uprising. Hundreds of civilians lost their lives. One reason why the Rebellion failed is because the Irish nationalists had hoped in vain for German assistance. Moreover, the insurgents had rushed into their quest, not considering potential obstacles (Ollevier, 2016).

The leaders of the uprising were executed by the British army. Initially, the Irish blamed these rebels for the many civilian casualties. However, general consensus shifted. The executed leaders came to be seen as martyrs who had died for the ideal of a free and independent Ireland. The event evoked an national engagement to stand up against British interference (English, 2004). The rebellion, often referred to as “The Easter Uprising” (English, 2004, p. 4), left a profound impact on Irish collective memory.

1.3 Anglo-Irish Treaty leads to Irish Free State in 1922

Shortly afterwards, the British government offered to install Home Rule as an act of good faith. This was intrinsically linked to one key condition. Ireland would only be granted more right to self-determination, if six Ulster counties remained under full British authority. Negotiations reached an impasse once more (CAIN, 2018).

In December 1918, all UK citizens casted their vote in the general election. The republican party Sinn Féin won 70% of the Irish seats in parliament. Sinn Féin took these results as an opportunity to install an independent Irish Republic (Sax, 2018). During this “Anglo-Irish War” (CAIN, 2018a), sometimes referred to as the “War of Independence” (CAIN, 2018a), an Irish Parliament was created where the Irish Republic was officially proclaimed (CAIN, 2018a).

1.3.1 Anglo-Irish War

The Anglo-Irish War found its origin in a political motive as Sinn Féin pursued the complete separation of Northern Ireland from the rest of the UK at the end of 1918. As the conflict evolved, both the British as the Irish resorted to violence. As a result, the War of Independence consisted of a political as well as a military dimension (Dorney, 2012).

In 1920, the atmosphere turned grimmer. Sinn Féin won the local Irish government elections during the summer of that year. Confident with their fortified position, the leaders of the self-proclaimed Irish Republic decided to install their own police force. The British took immediate paramilitary action (Dorney, 2012). Former British Army members, including many veterans of World War I, were sent to Ireland to assist the British police troupes. (Donnchadha, 2013) They were called the “Black and Tans” (Donnchadha, 2013) as a reference to the colour of their uniform.

In response to the violent repression, the “Irish Republican Army” (p. 106) formerly known as “The Irish Volunteers” (Sax, 2018, p. 106), began to focus its retaliation towards the British police (Dorney, 2012). The conflict escalated in November 1920. In the morning of 21 November, the IRA murdered 14 officers in Dublin as they were believed to be linked to British Intelligence Forces. The armed response of the Black and Tans followed on that same day. During a football match at Croke Park in Dublin, they opened fire on the cheering crowd.

Thirteen spectators lost their lives (Dorney, 2011). 21 November 1920 is referred to as “Bloody Sunday” (Dorney, 2011).

The year of 1921 is considered to be a true tipping-point in the Anglo-Irish War. After many failed attempts, the terms of Home-Rule were finally agreed upon. Violent attacks continued up until 11 July 1921, when a cease-fire was installed.

The spring elections reflected once more the division in Irish society since the end of the 19th century. The separatist party Sinn Féin obtained one victory after another in the south of Ireland, the north did not want to cut ties with the United Kingdom (Sax, 2018).

The Anglo-Irish War ended with the ratification of the “Anglo-Irish Treaty” (Jennings, n.d.). An Irish Free State was founded, consisting out of the main parts of Ireland. Although the new state would function independently for the most part (Sax, 2018), it was still tied to the United Kingdom under the title of a “Dominion” (Sax, 2018, p. 107). The northern region of Ireland was not subject to that same legislation as its citizens decided on their own free will to remain a valid part of the United Kingdom (Sax, 2018).

1.3.2 The Irish Civil War

The founding of the Irish Free State did not guarantee perpetual peace in Ireland. Many members of the IRA and Sinn Féin such as Eamon de Valera, did not agree with the Dominion status of the Irish Free State. Their main goal still remained a total independent Irish nation (Donnchadha, 2013). They are referred to as the “Irregulars” (Donnchadha, 2013). The number of violent attacks rose once more and the British government demanded Michael Collins, the Free State’s army leader, to put a stop to the frictions. However, he was murdered by a member of the Irregulars (Sax, 2018). Between 1922 and 1923, Ireland was characterized by vicious murders carried out by both sides, often as an act of retaliation. In May 1923, the surrender of the Irregulars’ troupes marked the end of the conflict (Donnchadha, 2013). As the fighting had taken place between two Irish groups with rivalry opinions, it is referred to as the “Irish Civil War” (Donnchadha, 2013).

From 1923 onwards, the Irish Free State still had to answer to the British Crown (Sax, 2018). It would take until 1949 for the Irish Free State to be transformed into the autonomous Republic

of Ireland (CAIN, 2018). However, Northern Ireland remained part of the United Kingdom as a result of the “Ireland Act” (CAIN, 2018).

The political fault line that split Ireland into two parts would be the subject of a violent conflict throughout the second part of the twentieth century called “The Troubles” (BBC History, 2018c).

1.4 The Troubles

In 1949, Ireland officially became a Republic, while Northern Ireland remained part of the United Kingdom. However, there was no general consensus on the position of Northern Ireland due to conflicting views. Whereas unionists felt at place within the United Kingdom, Irish Nationalists felt strongly about the Irish identity and therefore wanted to reunify Ireland as a whole (BBC, 2018). Nevertheless, the reason for this disagreement in Northern Ireland was far much deeper rooted than solely political points of view. Jonathan Tonge states it in the following way: “The division over who should ultimately govern is problematic enough. It is deepened by the religious, cultural and social divide which often coincides with the political divide.” (Tonge, 2013, p. 1). This can be demonstrated by the religious beliefs of Unionists and Nationalists. Whereas the latter can be linked to Catholicism, Unionists are mainly Protestant (Raats, 2018c).

1.4.1 The conflict

Up until the sixties, the atmosphere in Northern Ireland had been relatively stable and congenial. Nevertheless, a difference in religious beliefs divided the Northern Irish society into two groups: Protestants and Catholics. The latter was often treated as inferior, both economically as in term of political governance participation (Raats, 2018c). This can be attributed to their minority position of 30%. A stark contrast with the Protestants that represented more than 2/3 of the Northern Irish population (Jennings, n.d.).

Due to their disadvantaged position in the Northern Irish society, Catholics decided to organise civil rights marches during which they peacefully strived for more equality in the second half of the sixties. Initially, the marches had taken place without any major incidents. However, on 5 October 1968, a Catholic civil rights march in Derry, a predominantly Protestant city, came

to an end in a violent manner (Raats, 2018c). The Catholic protesters were suddenly attacked by the “Royal Ulster Constabulary” (Jennings, n.d.), the Irish police forces who strongly sympathized with Protestants in that region.

After years of suppression, many Catholics could not take it anymore. There was an outbreak of riots in several cities across Northern Ireland such as Belfast and Derry. However, Protestant groups struck immediately with violent attacks. Eventually, the British army was sent to the region in order to ease the tense situation.

Despite the aid of the British troops, Catholics felt especially let down by their own army: the IRA. As a result, a second generation of the IRA was formed. In an attempt to ensure the safety of the Catholic population, the IRA resorted to terror attacks and bombings throughout the seventies (Raats, 2018c). This bloody period in Northern Irish history is referred to as “The Troubles” (BBC, 2018) and would last for more than 30 years. It is characterised by violence and acts of retaliation by both parties. One of the most notorious days during the Troubles was 30 January 1972, otherwise known as “Bloody Sunday” (O’Neill, 2018).

1.4.2 Bloody Sunday

On 30 January 1972, a peaceful protest mars throughout the streets of Derry was planned. Due to previous incidents, the British government had banned all gatherings. As the initiators still planned to go ahead, the British army was largely present (Knuts, 2018a). The situation escalated when some young participants tried to provoke the British forces by launching objects at them. The British army responded violently by launching a hail of gunfire at the protestors, most of whom were unarmed. As they fled, several were struck in the back by a bullet. Thirteen civilians died. Due to the brutal assassinations, this tragedy will always be remembered as Bloody Sunday. The soldiers responsible for the murders were cleared of all charges. It would last until 2010 for the British government to officially apologize for the unacceptable murders. (O’Neill, 2018)

1.4.3 Hunger Strike

Having staged terroristic attacks and bombings in Northern Ireland, several IRA members found themselves locked up in the Maze-Prison. In 1981, they went on a hunger strike in order

to obtain the special status of political prisoner. The British government under Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher did not agree to this. Ten prisoners died, including IRA leader Bobby Sands (BBC History, 2018).

1.5 The Irish peace process

In the early nineties, there was a growing understanding that a solution had to be found to end the conflict in Northern Ireland. The British government under John Major realized that existing policies had not had the desired effect as violent attacks continued. In an attempt to bring about peace in Northern Ireland, the British government tried to meet the demands of both Nationalists and Unionists. It was believed that it would be beneficial for Northern Ireland if both parties were able to govern together and share power. The following years, small steps were taken towards a lasting peace. (Darby, 2003). However, it would take until 1998 for a solid agreement to be ratified: “The Good Friday Agreement” (BBC History, 2018).

1.5.1 The Anglo-Irish Agreement

For years, the British government tried to get a grip on the situation by means of repressive actions. However, they realised they were in need of a partner to be able to resolve the conflict. Therefore, they turned towards the Republic of Ireland. On 15 November 1985, the “Anglo-Irish Agreement” (CAIN, 2018) was signed by both governments. This stipulated that Northern Ireland would remain part of the UK, provided that its citizens agreed to this position (Darby, 2003).

1.5.2 Rapprochement between political parties

In Northern Ireland itself, the leaders of several political parties recognized the destructive impact of the conflict on Northern Irish society. Consequently, they slowly tried to put their differences aside and approached each other. A key event during this period is the meeting between Gerry Adams, the leader of the party Sinn Féin, and John Hume, leader of the SDLP. On the basis of a common nationalist point of view, the SDLP and Sinn Féin worked together to bring about peace in Ireland as a whole (Darby, 2003).

1.5.3 Downing Street Declaration

Negotiations between the British and Irish governments were advancing well. On 15 December 1993, both parties signed the “Downing Street Declaration” (BBC News, 1993). This agreement entailed that the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland were allowed to autonomously decide if they wanted to reunify the island of Ireland (Darby, 2003).

1.5.4 Sinn Féin: a new interlocutor in the negotiations

During the first half of the nineties, the IRA continued to launch terroristic attacks. Nevertheless, more people strived to include Sinn Féin, the political equivalent of the IRA, in the negotiations led by George Mitchell. This point of view was shared by Tony Blair who became the UK’s Prime Minister in May 1997. The nationalist party joined the negotiating table on 9 September 1997 after having ensured an armistice. Nevertheless, unionist members remained suspicious of Sinn Féin’s intentions (Darby, 2003).

1.5.5 The Good Friday Agreement

The ultimate objective of the negotiations was to find a way in which both nationalists and unionists could govern on equal terms in Northern Ireland. Therefore, in April 1998 a document was drawn up in which the conditions for power-sharing were listed (Darby, 2003). This “Belfast Agreement” or better known as “The Good Friday Agreement” (BBC History, 2018b) included the following key points:

- 1) “Northern Ireland’s future constitutional status was to be in the hands of its citizens.”
- 2) “If the people of Ireland, north and south, wanted a united Ireland, they could have one by voting for it.” (Darby, 2003)
- 3) “Northern Ireland’s current constitutional position would remain within the United Kingdom.” (Darby, 2003)
- 4) “Northern Ireland’s citizens would have the right to ‘identify themselves and be accepted as Irish or British, or both.’” (Darby, 2003)
- 5) “The Irish state would drop its territorial claim on Northern Ireland and instead define the Irish nation in terms of people rather than land. The consent principle would be built into the Irish constitution.” (Darby, 2003)

On 22 May 1998, a referendum was held in Northern Ireland as well as in the Republic of Ireland in order to ratify the Good Friday Agreement. With a majority of 71% and 94%, it was clear that both the Irish and Northern Irish citizens were in favour of the new form of government (BBC History, 2018).

1.5.6 Difficulties surrounding The Good Friday Agreement

The Good Friday Agreement was set to ensure a lasting peace in Northern Ireland. Nevertheless, tensions between nationalists and unionists had not yet completely faded. Bombings still occurred in Northern Ireland after the ratification of the agreement. Moreover, the disarmament of the IRA proved to be a delicate operation (Raats, 2018c).

Twenty years after its ratification, the Good Friday Agreement is still in place despite its fragile position. However, the outcome of Brexit negotiations may possibly put a strain on its preservation.

2. Brexit

The UK's departure from the European Union is scheduled for 29 March 2019 (BBC News, 2018). That historical day will mark the end of a complicated membership that will have lasted 45 years, the UK joined the European Economic Community on 1 January 1973 (European Union, 2016b).

In 2013, Prime Minister David Cameron promised to organize a referendum if his Conservative party would once more receive a majority of the public vote in the 2015 general election (BBC, 2016). However, the motive behind this referendum was not merely based on the will of the British population. In an unstable political landscape where Eurosceptic voices grew stronger, Cameron sought to strengthen his position as Prime Minister and as the leader of the Conservative Party (Mason, 2016). In 1975, an EU-referendum had already taken place for the same reason (Knuts, 2018). In January 2013, Cameron officially announced in his so-called "Bloomberg speech" (Watt, 2013) that an EU-referendum would be organized. The British population eventually casted its vote on 23 June 2016. The preceding campaign revolved around several topical themes, two of which were the rise in immigration and the financial relationship between the UK and the EU (BBC, 2016). These factors might indicate that the idea of a potential Brexit quickly emerged in just a few years. However, the UK's EU-membership has proven to be problematic on numerous occasions since its accession to the EEC in 1973.

2.1 The UK and the European Union: a complicated relationship

Up until the 20th century, the United Kingdom was considered to be one of the most powerful nations in the world. Nevertheless, the destructive impact of World War I and II forced the former empire to relinquish its dominant position to other thriving nations such as the United States of America and the Soviet Union (MacMillan, 2009).

Following World War II, many European countries agreed on the necessity of an alliance in order to prevent another war from ever happening. In 1949, the "Council of Europe" (European Union, 2016) was established. One of the initiators of this organization was the British Prime Minister Winston Churchill. This can be considered to be quite ironic as the United Kingdom still portrayed itself as an independent world power (Raats, 2018). In 1957, however, the UK declined membership of "the European Economic Community", otherwise known as

“the Common Market” (European Union, 2016). The UK did not see the benefits of a more relaxed trade agreement in Europe when it had the Commonwealth, former British colonies, to trade with. By 1962, the UK did apply for membership, but French President Charles De Gaulle used his veto. It would take until 1973 for the UK to be allowed participation in the common market (Raats, 2018).

One of the key topics during the Brexit-campaign was the issue of money. Eurosceptic politicians felt the UK’s financial contribution to the EU was excessive in comparison to other member states. This discontent finds its origin in the eighties when Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher claimed her country did not receive enough EU-funding considering the amount of money invested (Raats, 2018). Her words “I want my money back” (Raats, 2018, p. 150) became legendary.

The delicate topic of immigration played a central role in the campaign of the Leave camp. The British population were not as eager to leave the European Union as some Eurosceptic politicians. In an attempt to gain support, the political party UKIP focused on the correlation between EU-membership and the exponential increase in immigrants. The population of the once so welcoming country had now grown suspicious of immigration. Eurosceptic parties took advantage of this fear and used it as one of their defining campaign points (Knuts, 2018).

The Brexit campaign was characterised by a hostile climate in which false rumours were spread by the media and politicians did not shun away from scaremongering. A particular low point during the campaign was the murder of Jo Cox, a pro-European Labour MP (Knuts, 2018).

Some of the most prominent topics during the Brexit-campaign were immigration, finances and trade (BBC News, 2016). However, when contemplating to voluntarily leave the European Union, other decisive factors need to be taken into consideration. For instance, how will Brexit affect Northern Ireland? Nevertheless, that was never brought under the attention during the campaign. One possible explanation for the fact that scant attention was paid to the case of Northern Ireland could be that many never anticipated Brexit to become a reality. Moreover, the position of Northern Ireland within the UK is a complex and controversial issue. The fear of launching a heated debate or reigniting conflict might have been at the root of this lack of attention.

The referendum results exposed clear divisions within the UK. Whereas a majority of people over 60 voted in favour of a UK's withdrawal from the EU, more than three quarters of voters younger than 24 voted against Brexit (Aftab, 2016). Moreover, differences in voting behaviour also occurred on a regional level. Whereas a majority of 56% in Northern Ireland were in favour of 'remain', 53% of the people in England wanted to leave the EU (BBC News, 2018).

2.2 Brexit negotiations

On 23 June 2016, the leave camp won the referendum by 52%. Following these results, David Cameron resigned as Prime Minister and was succeeded by Home Secretary Theresa May (Hunt & Wheeler, 2018). As head of the British Government, May acts as the representative of the United Kingdom during the Brexit negotiations with the European Union.

On 29 March 2017, Theresa May triggered "Article 50" (BBC News, 2017) in a letter to the President of the European Council, Donald Tusk. Based on "the Lisbon Treaty" (Panizza, 2018), Article 50 initiates the Brexit procedure. As of that moment, the United Kingdom had exactly two years to come to an agreement with the European Union on the terms of Brexit (DeMorgen, 2017).

In June 2017, May surprisingly calls for an early general election in an attempt to secure her majority in Parliament. However, she is forced to make a "confidence and supply agreement" (Syal, 2017) with the Northern Irish unionist party DUP in order to maintain her position and avoid a hung parliament.

The first phase of the Brexit negotiations officially began on 26 June 2017 (BBC News, 2018c). In order to proceed, the United Kingdom and the European Union had to reach an agreement on the following three topics:

- "The rights of the European citizens within the United Kingdom"
- "The amount still to be paid by the UK in order to leave the EU"
- "The border between the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland" (Santens & De Graeve, 2017).

The Irish border issue has proven to be a deal breaker in the negotiations. Whatever both parties agree upon, the impact on Northern Ireland will be substantial. The following subchapter

discusses the consequences of Brexit for Northern Ireland. Special attention is given to the complexity of the Irish border issue.

2.3 The impact of Brexit on Northern Ireland

Northern Ireland forms the geographical connection between the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland. However, when Brexit is carried out, the dynamic between the two countries will undoubtedly change as the Republic of Ireland remains an EU-member state. The future role of the Irish border will not only affect Northern Ireland economically, but also on a political and even social level.

2.3.1 The Irish border issue

As part of the United Kingdom, Northern Ireland is separated from the Republic of Ireland by a land border. During the Troubles, this border was heavily guarded by military forces at checkpoints. In 1998, the ratification of the Good Friday Agreement transformed the frontier in a border which can be freely crossed without customs control (Morris, 2017). This had a positive effect on the economics of Northern Ireland as it was able to increase its trade with the Republic of Ireland. Brexit, however, puts a strain on this Agreement.

When the United Kingdom withdraws its membership, that particular frontier will become an external border to the European Union. Consequently, custom posts will have to be reinstalled on the Irish border as the Republic of Ireland continues to be a part of the EU (Torfs, 2017).

In order to resolve the Irish border issue, two options have been put forward by the negotiators. The first option is to install a hard border. However, this has not been widely applauded in Northern Ireland. Not only would it harm the region economically as there would be no free movement of goods and persons, The Good Friday Agreement would be put under pressure. If the Agreement were to be annulled, the conflict between unionists and nationalists could turn violent once more after a peacekeeping of more than 20 years (De Vos, 2018).

The second option is to install a soft border without the presence of checkpoints. As Northern Ireland would no longer be part of the EU, it would have to be granted a special status. In order to maintain a soft border between the two countries without the presence of customs control, Northern Irish legislation would have to be adapted to match that of the Republic of Ireland.

This plan has been criticised by both the UK government as the DUP, its unionist partner in Northern Ireland. They fear a special status for Northern Ireland would distance the region from the rest of the UK, creating an opportunity for nationalists to turn their wish of a united Ireland into reality. In other words, the instability resulting over the border question might easily extend to raising sectarian tensions. (Arnoudt, 2018).

3. Methodology

3.1 Corpus

This thesis examines how Northern Irish politicians responded to the results of the EU-referendum in 2016 and the progress of the Brexit-negotiations in the following period. In order to investigate the way in which these politicians voiced their opinion on the matter, a corpus was compiled out of 21 speeches that had been delivered within a time frame of 22 months. A more detailed discussion of the time period and corpus size can be found in the following paragraphs. The corpus consists of speeches and statements by the leaders or important members of the following Northern Irish political parties:

- Sinn Féin (SF)
- Democratic Unionist Party (DUP)
- Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP)
- Ulster Unionist Party (UUP)

The corpus is limited to these four parties for two main reasons. Firstly, these parties are considered to be the largest in Northern Ireland and therefore have the biggest impact on the political landscape in the region (DeMorgen, 2017). Smaller political entities were not taken into consideration for this thesis. Secondly, an equal number of speeches by nationalist and unionist politicians was included to provide fair coverage of the political spectrum in Northern Ireland. In the corpus, the Republican party Sinn Féin and the Centre-left SDLP occupy the nationalist position. The unionist perspective is represented by the right wing DUP and the Centre-right Ulster Unionist Party (Melaugh, 2012).

During the initial search for speeches and statements by Northern Irish politicians, the following criteria were applied:

- The speeches focus on the topic of Brexit;
- The speeches were delivered or published within the first four months after the referendum outcome;
- Speeches were by the leaders or important members of the following Northern Irish political parties: SF, DUP, SDLP, UUP;
- The speeches were published on official media channels: party's website, YouTube channel of the party or of a renowned newspaper;
- The focus is on the content of the speeches rather than on specific linguistic aspects.

However, it became clear that the time period had to be extended and the search area widened as the initial search did not provide us with a sufficient amount of data. The adaptation of the selection criteria has two distinct advantages. Firstly, the corpus comprises more data. Secondly, a more extensive period of time is covered to examine the way in which Northern Irish politicians voiced their opinion about the impact on Northern Ireland of the UK's withdrawal from the European Union. In other words, the longer-term perspective is better suited to address the research question than a simple 'snapshot' which is limited to a brief period.

The speeches and statements within this corpus can be categorized in a time frame of 22 months. Both the start date and cut of point are linked to a main event that took place between the EU-referendum, held on 23 June 2016, and the end of the second phase of the Brexit negotiations. The earliest speech dates from the morning after the EU-referendum. Less than 24 hours after the polling stations closed, it became clear that the UK had voted to leave, but a majority in Northern Ireland wanted to remain EU-citizens (BBC News, 2016d). The final speech that has been added to the corpus was delivered on 7 April 2018. On this particular day, the SDLP organised its Party Conference in Belfast during which Colum Eastwood delivered a speech with great attention to the impact on Northern Ireland of the UK's withdrawal from the European Union (Eastwood, 2018).

In order to be able to perform an in-depth analysis of the corpus, the selected speeches had to have the following aspects in common:

- *Range of context:* speeches were selected if they specifically addressed the impact of Brexit on Northern Ireland, rather than the UK's withdrawal from the EU in general.
- *Range of audience:* the selected speeches were either conducted at an official party meeting, during a conference on the topic of Brexit or in the presence of journalists when giving a statement or reaction to a particular event in the negotiations.
- *Range of time:* no specific time criteria was set for the selection of speeches. However, speeches of more than 5 minutes had to discuss multiple aspects concerning the impact of Brexit on Northern Ireland. Shorter statements could focus on merely one theme, e.g. the designation of a special status for Northern Ireland.

The data selected for this analysis were retrieved from various sources. Six statements were published in a written form on the parties' own website. Few online newspapers published Northern Irish politicians' speeches in their entirety. Only four could be drawn from the online papers The Belfast Telegraph and The Guardian. As a result, a majority of the speeches and statements were found in video-form on YouTube. In order to be able to analyse all collected data in the same systematic way, 11 of the 21 speeches had to be transcribed by the author.

In newspaper articles, the exact formulation is not always adopted word by word. In order to authentically portray the way in which Northern Irish politicians voice their opinion on Brexit, the speeches and statements were typed out entirely, while fillers such as "erm" were omitted. It sometimes occurred that the speaker repeated certain words or rephrased a sentence. These sections were integrated in the transcription. In the case of an interview or statement by more than one person, the transcription indicates who is speaking. Moreover, the questions asked by an interviewer are transcribed if audible on the video file.

Due to the strong accent of certain speakers, some words were not always clear enough to be transcribed. The sections over which there was doubt were highlighted in yellow. Unintelligible words or phrases were replaced by the caption "XXX" and highlighted in yellow as well. The correct spelling of content-specific words such as "the Taoiseach" was verified by means of the Oxford Dictionary.

Combined in a Word-file, each speech or statement was categorised according to the speaker's political party. Extra information is provided with each text concerning the name of the speaker, the date of publication and the link to the online location of the original video file. The original title of the news article or YouTube video was used to identify the texts within the corpus. In addition, the first page of the corpus gives an overview of the speeches selected for this analysis. The complete version of the corpus transcripts was placed in the appendices.

3.2 Methodology

3.2.1 Theoretical background

This thesis looks to gain inside in the way Northern Irish politicians voice their opinion concerning the impact of Brexit on Northern Ireland. Via speeches or statements, politicians are able to address a large audience. Consequently, it is an excellent tool to consolidate or gain power within the political landscape. The methodology that is most suited to analyse this type of data is Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). Sociolinguist Van Dijk (2001) describes the approach as followed:

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is a type of discourse analytical research that primarily studies the way social power abuse, dominance and inequality are enacted, reproduced, and resisted by text and talk in the social and political context. With such dissident research, critical discourse analysts take explicit position, and thus want to understand, expose and ultimately resist social inequality. (as cited in Vandebussche, 2014, p. 7).

In terms of our research, the notion of power should be interpreted in a subtler manner. The complex political situation in Northern Ireland pushes the politicians to wisely use language as a way to clarify their position or differentiate themselves from others. So, although we cannot speak of ‘abuse’, the notion of power is clearly present in the discourse of these politicians.

One of the founders of the CDA approach is sociolinguist Norman Fairclough. He describes language as “a social practice” (Fairclough, 2003, p. 25). Language should not be categorised as neutral or as simple linguistic elements. The choice of words or the way in which we form our sentences reflects our attitude towards a subject (Fairclough, 2003). This notion is also applicable to our research. By analysing the discourse of Northern Irish politicians, we gain an insight into how parties forward their interests. It will be interesting to observe how those politicians aim to convince the audience of their political point of view by means of their persuasive discourse.

Critical Discourse Analysis is not limited to just one theory or methodology (Vandebussche, 2014). The specific CDA approach used in this thesis is “framing”. According to Arowolo, “Framing theory suggests that how something is presented to the audience (called “the frame”) influences the choices people make about how to process that information. Frames are abstractions that work to organize or structure message meaning.” (2017, p. 1).

In other words, framing gives perspective to a situation as one sees only a small part of the ‘picture’ due to the frame. Consequently, this will have an impact on people’s behaviour. When the Northern Irish politicians for example only talk negatively about the British government in their speeches, their audience will most likely be influenced by this frame and might even adapt their initial opinion on the matter.

Ervin Goffman was one of the first researchers to use the term. He explained it in the following way: “A primary framework is one that is seen as rendering what would otherwise be a meaningless aspect of the scene into something that is meaningful.” (Goffman, 1986, p. 21).

The following section explains how the framing-approach was applied to the corpus of this thesis. Framing is often used to expose how certain aspects of a topic receive special or less attention in news articles. However, the data for this particular research consists of political speeches and statements. Due to the fixed spaces in a newspaper, articles are often limited in word count. Moreover, the exact formulation is not always adopted word by word in the article due to various reasons. In order to authentically portray the way in which Northern Irish politicians voice their opinion on Brexit, complete speeches and statements are the subject of this research.

Framing can be used to analyse texts on a quantitative and qualitative level. In order to obtain a clear image of the Northern Irish politicians’ opinion on the impact of Brexit on Northern Ireland, the results of a quantitative analysis are used to discuss in great detail the content of the speeches and statements: the qualitative analysis.

Frames can be categorised in two types: “generic” and “specific” (Arowolo, 2017, p. 2). Whereas generic frames are applicable to various contexts, specific frames can only be used in one. This research makes use of an inductive approach to determine frames that are solely linked to the topic of Brexit (Arowolo, 2017).

3.2.2 *Analysis*

Following a first reading of the 21 speeches and statements, ten main frames were established across the corpus. Subsequently, the corpus was analysed both quantitatively and qualitatively. The results of these in-depth analyses can be found in the two excel sheets that were added to the appendix. In the next section, an overview of the frames is provided, accompanied by

examples from the corpus. Based on the ideology and political position of each party, a hypothesis was formulated several times on their possible point of view. Following an in-depth analysis of each text in the corpus, it will be possible to either accept or reject the previously formulated hypotheses.

<i>Frames</i>
<p>1) <i>Majority of Northern Ireland voted to remain</i></p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">a) Emphasised b) De-emphasised</p>
<p>2) Notion of unity</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">2.1 Statements that express unity within Northern Ireland</p> <p style="padding-left: 80px;">a) Emphasised b) De-emphasised</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">2.2 Statements that express unity between UK and Northern Ireland</p> <p style="padding-left: 80px;">a) Emphasised b) De-emphasised</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">2.3 Statements that express unity between the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland</p> <p style="padding-left: 80px;">a) Emphasised b) De-emphasised</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">2.4 Statements that express unity between the UK and the European Union</p> <p style="padding-left: 80px;">a) Emphasised b) De-emphasised</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">2.5 Statements that express unity between the UK and the Republic of Ireland</p> <p style="padding-left: 80px;">a) Emphasised b) De-emphasised</p>
<p>3) Good Friday Agreement is in danger</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">a) Emphasised b) De-emphasised</p>
<p>4) The Irish border issue</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">4.1 Statements that express acceptable/ preferable hard border</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Emphasised b. De-emphasised <p>4.2 Statements that express acceptable/ preferable soft border</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> c. Emphasised d. De-emphasised
<p>5) Acceptable/ preferable special status for Northern Ireland</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Emphasised b. De-emphasised

1) Majority of Northern Ireland voted to remain

When the referendum results were published, it quickly became clear that the people of Northern Ireland had voted quite differently to the rest of the UK. Although the leave camp in the UK won the referendum by 52%, a majority of the voters in Northern Ireland indicated that they wanted to remain a part of the European Union. Up until present day, Northern Ireland is strongly divided on what the constitutional character of Northern Ireland should be. Whereas nationalists advocate for a reunification of the Republic of Ireland with Northern Ireland, unionists strongly adhere to Northern Irish bond with the UK. When taking this political background into consideration, two hypotheses can be formulated.

- *The republican parties, Sinn Féin and the SDLP, will potentially pay more attention to this majority vote in Northern Ireland in order to highlight the differences between Northern Ireland and the UK in their speeches.*
- *The unionist parties, DUP and UUP, will potentially downplay this Northern Irish majority vote and underline the majority 'leave' vote in the whole of the United Kingdom to safeguard the Union.*

In order to accept or reject these two hypotheses, we looked for statements or fragments that either emphasised or de-emphasised the majority remain vote in Northern Ireland.

Examples from the corpus

- c. *Emphasised: The people in the North voted to remain. That is very, very clear. That is the outcome of the referendum on this part of the island. (SF1)*
- d. *De-emphasised: ... why we must get on with implementing the will of the British people last June. (DUP2)*

2) *Notion of unity*

The notion of unity has multiple dimensions in Northern Ireland. Firstly, Northern Ireland is part of the United Kingdom on a constitutional basis. However, Brexit has caused tensions once more within Northern Ireland itself as the political parties have conflicting views on the future of their region in a post-Brexit era. Unionists support the scenario in which Northern Ireland remains an integral part of the United Kingdom. Nationalists want to re-establish the bond with the Republic of Ireland (BBC News, 2012). Consequently, this type of union is a rather sensitive topic. When the UK withdraws from the European Union, the association the country has with the EU and the Republic of Ireland will evidently change. These different understandings of what a union should be, are the subject of the second frame. In the corpus, we looked for statements that either emphasised or de-emphasised these ideas.

Examples from the corpus

- Statements that express unity within Northern Ireland
 - a. *Emphasised: And achieving a 56 % vote was brought about as a result of unionists, nationalists and republicans voted together to remain in Europe.* (SF1)
 - b. *De-emphasised: At home, we may not have agreed on the 'leave or remain' issue ...* (DUP2)
- Statements that express unity between UK and Northern Ireland
 - a. *Emphasised: Maintaining Northern Ireland's economic and political status as an integral part of the United Kingdom is absolutely crucial to me and my Party.* (DUP4)
 - b. *De-emphasised: Well, we are very concerned that we are collateral damage in this battle between the British government and the European Union over Brexit.* (SF2)
- Statements that express unity between the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland
 - a. *Emphasised: And we made it clear in the course of the campaign that our interest, North and South, would not be served by one part of the island been out of the European Union and the other part of the island being in the European Union.* (SF1)
 - b. *De-emphasised: For those who think that they can exploit Brexit to pursue a united Ireland, you are not helping the people of Northern Ireland through such a selfish pursuit of your own agenda* (UUP7)

- Statements that express unity between the UK and the European Union
 - a. Emphasised: *Why should we turn against our European neighbours?* (SF2)
 - b. De-emphasised: *The EU has said no to that. It is the EU that is causing the problems in terms of a hard border in Ireland. Not the DUP, not the British government.* (DUP 3)

- Statements that express unity between UK and the Republic of Ireland
 - a. Emphasised: *... and that we can agree a comprehensive trade agreement between the UK and the EU. Such a deal is evidently in the best interests of both the United Kingdom and Ireland given our close trading relationship.* (DUP4)
 - b. De-emphasised: *And the Irish Republic are flexing their muscles and using their current position to try to gain wins for them.* (DUP3)

3) *Good Friday Agreement is in danger*

During the Troubles, the atmosphere in Northern Ireland was characterised by violence. Since the signing of the Good Friday Agreement in 1998, however, the region has known a relatively stable period during which peace has been maintained (BBC History, 2018c). In a speech about the 20th anniversary of the Agreement, Secretary of State Karen Bradley highlighted its value: “The Agreement that was reached twenty years ago was one of historic magnitude, a landmark in the history of Northern Ireland, of Ireland and of these islands. It was an occasion when politics triumphed over the division and violence that had torn Northern Ireland apart over the preceding two decades.” (Bradley, 2018).

However, as the preservation of this agreement could potentially come under threat due to the effects of Brexit, the majority of the Northern Irish political parties would most likely emphasise its value.

Examples from the corpus

- a. Emphasised: *No-one should be in any doubt - the instability of Brexit and the instability faced by the institutions of the Good Friday Agreement are inextricably linked.* (SDLP3)
- b. De-emphasised: / (no de-emphasising statements were found in the speeches. This will be discussed in Chapter four.)

4) *Irish border issue*

One of the biggest stumbling blocks during the Brexit negotiations is the future characteristic of the border between the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland. In order to maintain its trading relationship with the Republic of Ireland, Northern Ireland needs the border between the two countries to remain a zone free of customs and checks.

Examples from the corpus

- Statements that express acceptable/ preferable hard border
 - a. *Emphasised: And therefore, the choice is very easy for me. If there have to be some checks, then let there be checks. (DUP5)*
 - b. *De-emphasised: "What we do not want is any hardening of the border and what we do not want is an EU frontier on the island of Ireland." (SF5)*
- Statements that express acceptable/ preferable soft border
 - c. *Emphasised: On future customs ties the DUP position is clear. We want to secure an outcome that keeps the border open and seamless for businesses involved in cross-border trade. (DUP1)*
 - d. *De-emphasised: /*

5) *Acceptable/ preferable special status for Northern Ireland*

If a soft border were to be installed between the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland without the presence of customs control, Northern Irish legislation would have to be altered to match the EU's rules and regulations. However, as Northern Ireland would no longer hold membership of the EU, it would have to be granted a special status. Nevertheless, such a measure could once more raise tensions between nationalists and unionists concerning the constitutional character of Northern Ireland.

- a. *Emphasised: And this is all about what kind of Ireland will emerge after Brexit. And the only way to positively ship that is through a special designated status for the North within the European Union. (SF3)*
- b. *De-emphasised: Whether it be in terms of transition or future trade relations with those in the Single Market, Northern Ireland must be treated in the same fashion as the rest of the UK. (DUP1)*

4. Results

In the following section, a quantitative analysis is carried out on the frames that were derived from the corpus. In order to maximize the ease of reading, the frames are not written in full. Instead, they are referred to by a code. An overview of the latter can be found in the previous section. Before examining each of the ten frames individually, the overall ratio between the frames is broken down by means of the following proportional bar chart:

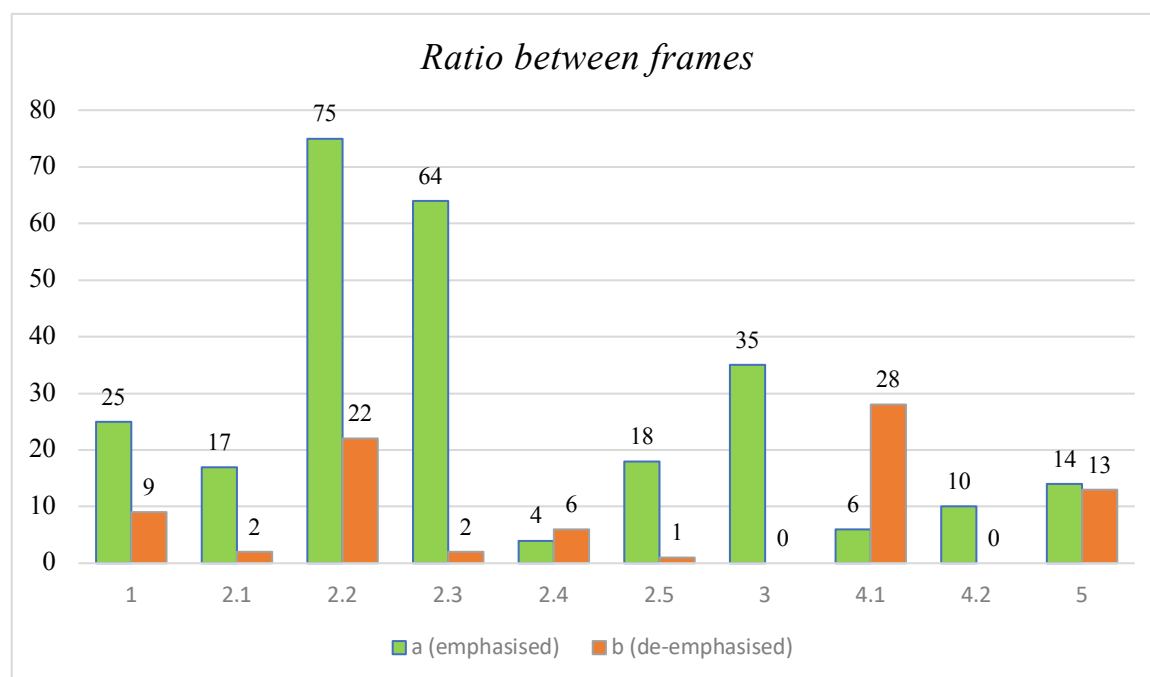


Fig. 1: Ratio between frames

This chart indicates the number of times each frame occurred in the corpus. However, if a text fragment is applicable to, for example three different frames, it is also listed three times in the analysis. The unity between the UK and Northern Ireland was emphasised 75 times throughout these speeches and statements, making it the highest profile frame. The top 3 of most used frames consists out of the frame “Unity between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland” (64 times emphasised), followed by 35 statements that stress the danger Brexit poses to the Good Friday Agreement.

The remaining frames’ frequency rate all range between 2 and 28. However, 2.5b, 3b and 4.2b form an exception. Neither the danger imposed on the Good Friday Agreement, nor the acceptability of a soft border are de-emphasised in the speeches. The unity between the UK and the Republic of Ireland is only briefly downplayed once throughout the entire corpus. These

low numbers might be attributed to the fact that emphasise and de-emphasise are not equivalent concepts. This idea can be clearly demonstrated by the ratio between 2.3a and 2.3b. As the unity between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland is numerously emphasised, more specifically 64 times in total, it is plausible that few statements will downplay this specific notion of unity. In other words, an interested speaker is less likely to make an explicit statement de-emphasising unity, compared to a different speaker making the positive case by emphasising unity. Although emphasising and de-emphasising are essentially not equivalent concepts, the value of both categories should not be overlooked. Indeed, it is possible to assess emphasising statements by means of the two categories.

However, this reasoning does not apply to all frames. Much depends on the degree to which the political parties share the same point of view on the topic. In the case of conflicting views, there will most likely be a balance between emphasising and de-emphasising statements.

This can be illustrated by the frame ‘Acceptable special status for Northern Ireland’. As the political parties do not agree on this topic, the number of emphasised and de-emphasised statements are evenly distributed, 14 and 13 times respectively.

Before examining each frame individually, it is useful to first compare how both the nationalist and unionist’s opinion on the different topics relate to one another. The following proportional bar charts, figure 2 and 3, indicate how many times a particular frame is emphasised/de-emphasised by respectively the nationalist or unionist parties. By comparing these charts, several clear contrasts can be identified.

Firstly, 75 statements emphasise the unity between the UK and Northern Ireland. Only 2 of those statements were made by a nationalist politician. This uneven distribution could be classified as a predictable pattern that clearly reflects the ideology of those 2 political courants. As unionist parties want to maintain their close bond to the UK, it does not come as a surprise that they opt to strongly highlight this type of union.

Secondly, figure 2 and 3 show that disagreement occurs on the acceptability of a soft border. Out of the 10 statements that emphasise frame 4.2, a total of 9 belong to unionist speakers. Consequently, only 10% of the overall statements that stress the option of a soft border were made by nationalists. The question of a soft border is intrinsically linked to frame 4.1: the acceptability of a hard border. Thus, an in-depth comparative analysis of these two frames will

be provided further on in this thesis chapter, in the following quantitative analysis of the individual frames. The issue is also touched upon in chapter 5: Discussion.

Thirdly, the unity between Ireland and Northern Ireland occupies a central position in the speeches and statements by nationalist politicians. As the latter advocate for a reunification with the Republic of Ireland, it is no coincidence that about 90% (58) of the speeches were given by nationalist speakers.

Furthermore, figure 2 indicates that the preservation of the Good Friday Agreement is a high-profile topic in the speeches by nationalist politicians (29 times emphasized). This frame, however, is far less discussed by members of the DUP and UUP, more specifically 6 times. As this difference cannot be explained quantitatively, a substantive analysis of the frame is provided in the following chapter.

Lastly, nationalists and unionists hold opposite views in terms of a special status for Northern Ireland. Whereas, unionist speakers focus on de-emphasising this option (13 times), nationalist politicians stress their preference for a special status no less than 14 times.

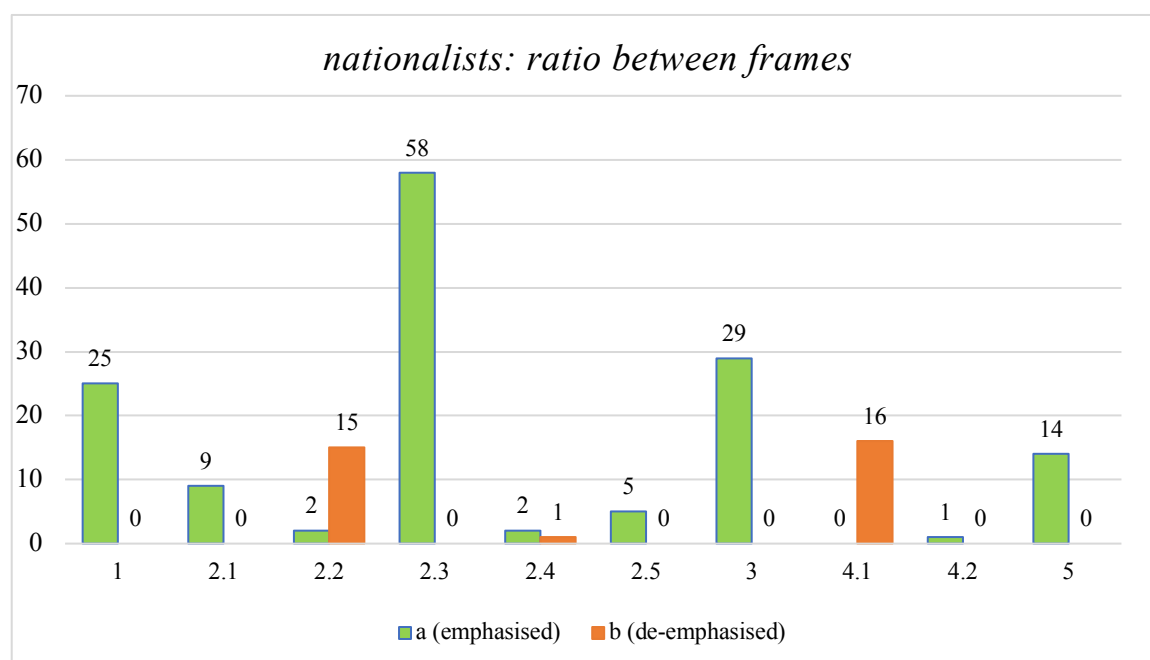


Fig. 2: *nationalists: ratio between frames*

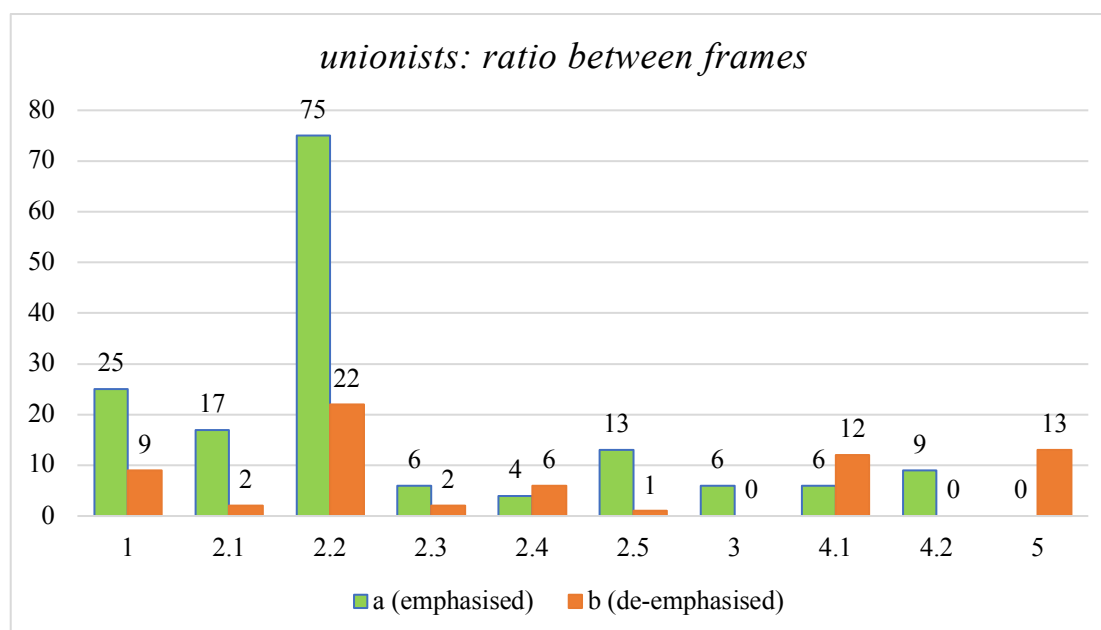


Fig. 3: unionists: ratio between frames

The quantitative analysis of the differences or similarities between unionists and nationalists has already provided us with interesting information. In order to fully grasp each political party's point of view, we also analyse each frame quantitatively on an individual basis. By doing so, interesting contrasts of patterns can be exposed.

To each frame, 2 pie charts have been added to visually demonstrate the ratio between the nationalist parties on the one hand and the unionist parties on the other hand. However, if a frame is only emphasised/de-emphasised by one of the 2 parties or by none, no pie chart is provided. Only the pie charts that reveal an interesting contrast have been included in the main text. The remaining ones can be consulted in the appendix.

Frame 1: Majority of Northern Ireland voted to remain

a: statements that emphasise the frame

The corpus contains 25 text fragments in which the majority's remain vote is emphasised. When examining who those statements belong to, it is clear that this particular frame received a great amount of attention by the nationalist parties. As the latter political parties discuss the majority vote in Northern Ireland 25 times, the DUP and UUP never put any focus on it. As only the nationalists emphasise the frame, it is useful to look at the ratio between the parties that endorse this political ideology. The 25 text fragments are roughly divided in half between Sinn Féin and the SDLP, responsible for respectively 14 and 11 emphasising statements.

b: statements that de-emphasise the frame

As no emphasising statements for this frame could be found with the unionist parties, it is highly likely that they will be at the forefront when the frame is de-emphasised. As all 9 de-emphasising statements were made by unionist speakers, we can see that this is indeed the case. When examining how the statements are divided between the two unionist parties, more noticeable differences can be found in comparison to the ratio between Sinn Féin and the SDLP in 1a. Whereas the DUP tries to downplay the majority vote 8 times (89%), the UUP only touches on the topic once (11 %). In order to determine whether the UUP lacked interest in the frame or made use of expressions that indirectly downplayed the frame, a qualitative analysis of the text fragments is provided in the following chapter.

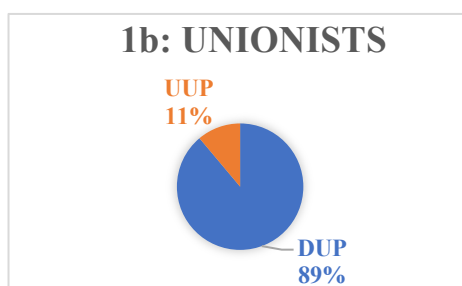


Fig.4: 1b: unionists

Frame 2.1: unity within Northern Ireland

a: statements that emphasise the frame

The unity within Northern Ireland itself was discussed 17 times. These statements are almost equally divided between nationalist (9 times) and unionist speakers (8 times). Nevertheless, the following pie chart (figure 5) shows that the difference in ratio between the 2 unionist parties clearly stands out. While a speaker for the UUP only emphasises the Northern Irish unity once, the DUP makes no less than 7 statements. The two nationalist parties stress this unity roughly about the same number of times. The corresponding pie chart has been included in the appendix.

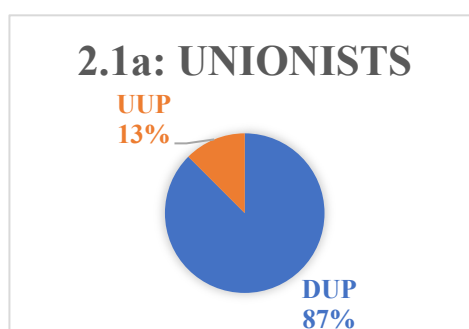


Fig. 5: 2.1a: unionists

b: statements that de-emphasise the frame

Only the unionist party DUP de-emphasised the unity within Northern Ireland. It should be noted that those 2 statements were given within one and the same speech. Consequently, it is important to look at its context and content in the following chapter.

Frame 2.2: unity between UK and Northern Ireland

a: statements that emphasise the frame

As was previously indicated, 73 out of the 75 emphasising statements were expressed by unionist parties. The following pie chart shows that those 73 statements are not evenly distributed between the 2 parties. With 48 statements, the DUP is responsible for almost two thirds of emphasising statements by unionist speakers. An in-depth analysis of this high-profile frame is provided in the Discussion chapter.

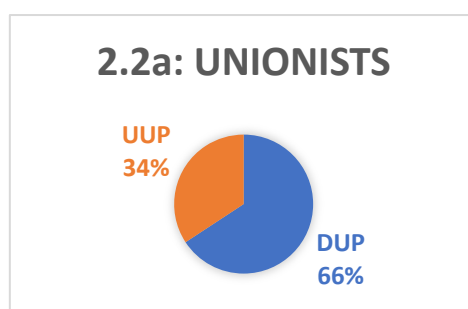


Fig. 6: 2.2a: unionists

b: statements that de-emphasise the frame

The unity between the United Kingdom and Northern Ireland was de-emphasised 22 times in total. With 15 statements, the nationalist parties tried to de-emphasise this particular frame almost twice as much in comparison to the unionists. The DUP was solely responsible for the seven unionist statements. The following pie chart (figure 7) shows that Sinn Féinn de-emphasised the frame 10 times and the SDLP 5 times.

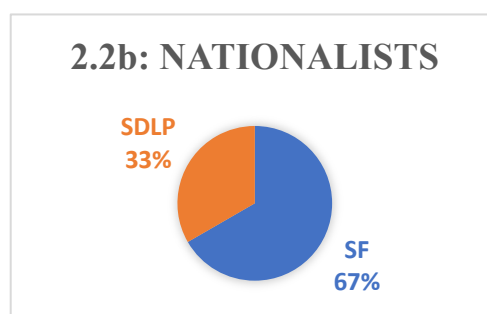


Fig 7: 2.2b: nationalists

Frame 2.3: unity between the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland

a: statements that emphasise the frame

Out of the 64 statements that emphasised the unity between the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland, only 6 belonged to the unionist parties. The following pie chart (figure 8) indicates that Sinn Féin members are responsible for three quarters of the emphasising statements by nationalists. 16 of those were pronounced by the party leader Mary Lou McDonald.

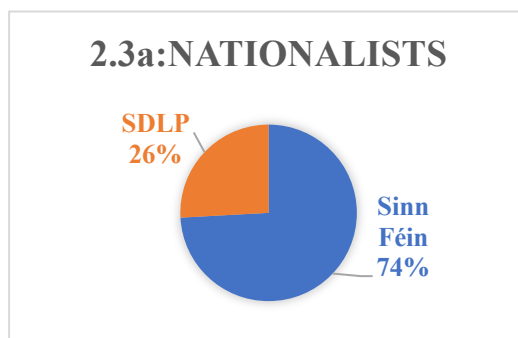


Fig. 8: 2.3a: nationalists

b: statements that de-emphasise the frame

The DUP and the UUP were the only parties to de-emphasise this particular frame twice in total.

Frame 2.4: unity between the UK and the European Union

The unity between the UK and the European Union is a frame that did not receive a great amount of attention by the Northern Irish speakers. The four emphasising statements were equally distributed between the nationalist and unionist side. However, 5 of the 6 de-emphasising statements were pronounced by unionist speakers. The general lack of commitment to this frame will be discussed in the qualitative section.

Frame 2.5: unity between the UK and the Republic of Ireland

a: statements that emphasise the frame

The corpus contains 18 text fragments in which the unity between the UK and the Republic of Ireland is emphasised. With 13 statements, the unionists parties were clearly more committed to the frame than Sinn Féin and the SDLP. The following pie chart (figure 9) clearly shows that the DUP is responsible for around three quarters of the emphasising statements by unionist speakers.

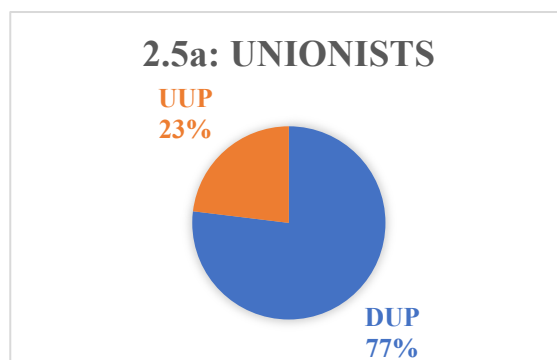


Fig. 9: 2.5a: unionists

b: statements that de-emphasise the frame

Nigel Dodds, Deputy Leader of the DUP, was the only speaker to de-emphasise this unity.

Frame 3: The Good Friday Agreement is in danger

The idea that the Good Friday Agreement is in danger due to Brexit was emphasised 35 times in total of which a vast majority by the nationalist parties (29 times). No parties tried to downplay this frame. A possible explanation for this general consensus is discussed in the following chapter.

Frame 4.1: acceptable/preferable hard border

When comparing the number of emphasised statements (6) with the de-emphasised ones (28), it is clear that the idea of a hard border receives little support from both the unionist and the nationalist politicians. The DUP is the only party that expressed statements in favour of a hard border. Moreover, the vast majority (5) of those comments were made by Sammy Wilson, the Brexit spokesperson for the DUP. Interestingly, the DUP emphasises as well as de-emphasises the idea of a soft border. This difference in pattern will be discussed in the following chapter. In terms of de-emphasising the frame, Sinn Féinn clearly took the initiative with 13 of the 28 statements in total. The ratio between the statements by Sinn Féin and the SDLP is represented in the following pie chart (figure 10).

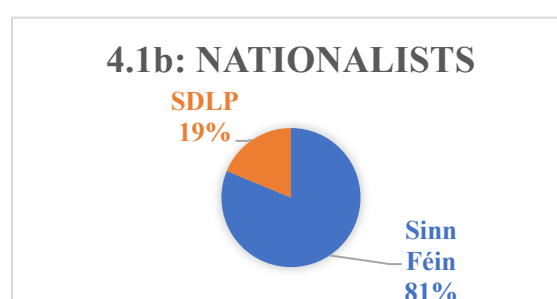


Fig 10: 4.1b: nationalists

Frame 4.2: acceptable/preferable soft border

a: statements that emphasise the frame

With 90% of the emphasising statements, the unionist parties are the most open to the idea of a soft border. The notion of a soft border is most frequently (6 times) stressed by the DUP. This can be demonstrated by means of the following pie chart (figure 11).

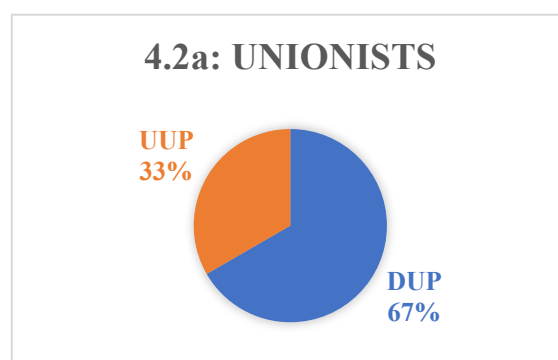


Fig. 11: 4.2a: unionists

b: statements that de-emphasise the frame

None of the political parties tried to de-emphasise the proposal of a soft border. As previously mentioned, the frames about a possible soft or hard border are intrinsically linked to one another. A clear example of this is Sinn Féin. Although this party was strongly present in terms of de-emphasising the idea of a hard border, its speakers did not engage in the discussion of the other option, namely a soft border. In order to understand the underlying causes of this complex situation, an in-depth comparative analysis of these two frames will be provided in the Discussion chapter.

Frame 5: acceptable/preferable special status for Northern Ireland

a: statements that emphasise the frame

The quantitative results clearly show an ardent defender of a special status for Northern Ireland, namely Sinn Féin (14 statements). No other party expresses its support for this idea.

b: statements that de-emphasise the frame

Whereas the nationalist parties stay silent in terms of de-emphasising the frame, the DUP and the UUP express their opposition to a special status respectively 5 and 8 times. This ratio between the two unionist parties is demonstrated by means of the following pie chart (figure 12).

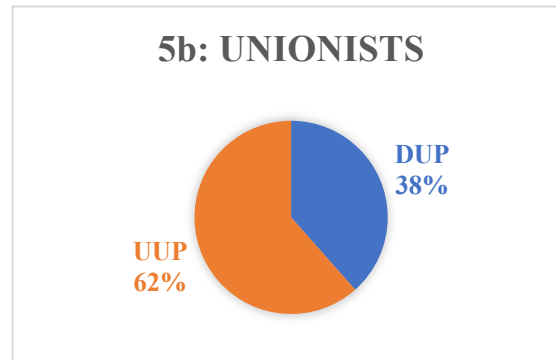


Fig. 12: 5b: unionists

5. Discussion

In the results chapter, we compared the ratio between the different frames. However, a quantitative analysis does not suffice to fully comprehend how Northern Irish politicians responded to the EU-referendum outcome and the Brexit-negotiations. Thus, this chapter presents an in-depth discussion in terms of content of the speeches and statements which will be linked to pertinent aspects of the quantitative results.

On various occasions, a text fragment out of the corpus is used to illustrate a certain point of discussion. To prevent this chapter from becoming too substantial, only one or two examples are provided each time in the text. The remaining text fragments can be consulted in the appendix (qualitative analysis).

Frame 1: majority of Northern Ireland voted to remain

a: statements that emphasise the frame

The quantitative analysis of the corpus indicated that only the nationalist parties emphasised this frame. Moreover, these statements were almost evenly distributed between the two parties. Does the SDLP and Sinn Féin, however, articulate their point of view in the same way? In other words, do these two political parties focus on the same points? Are strong expressions used in their speeches? In order to get an in-depth understanding of the frame, the speeches have to be examined quantitatively as well as in terms of content.

The speeches and statements by members of Sinn Féin and the SDLP show multiple similarities. Firstly, the specific percentage of Northern Irish voters that cast a remain vote is repeated on numerous occasions:

- *56 percent of people in Northern Ireland voted to remain in Europe. That is a statistic I believe is worthy of repetition. 56 percent of people in Northern Ireland voted to remain in Europe. (SDLP2)*

The speakers might quote this percentage to stress that it was not a handful of voters, but a majority of the Northern Irish population that voted against leaving the European Union. The nationalist politicians link this majority vote to the notion of democracy. As more than half of the Northern Irish voters wish to remain EU-citizens, the government needs to respect this outcome based on the democratic principles:

- *For in terms of this island, Mister Cameron or whoever succeeds him have to accept the democratic outcome of this referendum in this part of Ireland. (SF1)*
- *Our focus is clearly on the democratically expressed wishes of people here in the North. (SF1)*

Speakers of both the SDLP and Sinn Féin often make use of strong language to voice their opinion on this frame. One particular phrase that reoccurs is “being dragged out of the EU”:

- *Obviously, Brexit impacts on that because that is a determination by this British government to drag us out of Europe against the democratically expressed wishes of the people. (SF2)*
- *Let me be clear: all of these steps represent a phase process in our opposition to being dragged out of the European Union against our will. (SDLP2)*

The phrase “dragged out of the EU” focusses on the actions by the British government. However, when talking about the democratic will of the people, Colum Eastwood (SDLP) makes use of the phrase “to give their consent”. By doing so, he underlines the actions of another participant in the debate, namely the Northern Irish voting population.

- *Northern Ireland did not consent to that change. (SDLP3)*
- *Mister Speaker, the people of the north of Ireland are not giving their consent to be dragged out of the European Union and we stand by them on that. (SDLP1)*

Despite these similarities in the speeches of the 2 parties, some characteristics can only be attributed to one party.

Firstly, the SDLP displays pugnacity. On several occasions, Eastwood declares that his party will try its hardest to defend the will of the Northern Irish voters:

- *People in Northern Ireland told us that they wanted to remain within the European Union. And we are going to look for every single device possible to make sure that happens and I hope others join with us. (SDLP1)*
- *After the referendum, we pledged to use every parliamentary legal and political mechanism at our disposal to defend the will of the 56 percent in Northern Ireland who voted to remain in the European Union. (SDLP2)*

Secondly, it can be argued that Sinn Féin is more outspoken about its nationalistic beliefs in comparison to the SDLP. This can be illustrated by means of the following example:

- *The Irish government has a very clear responsibility to defend that vote, that democratic decision and to act in the best interests of the people of all of Ireland. (SF4)*

With this phrase, Sinn Féin party leader Mary Lou McDonald clearly indicates that she sees Northern Ireland as part of ‘Ireland’ and therefore leans towards support of the Irish government.

Moreover, Sinn Féin politicians do not shy away from tendentious choice of words. The following example illustrates how Brexit spokesperson David Cullinane indirectly expresses his position with regards to Brexit by using the word ‘sensible’:

- *... and a majority of people in the north voted for very sensible and very practical solutions to stay in the European Union. (SF5)*

b: statements that de-emphasise the frame

In the corpus, a significant smaller amount of de-emphasising statements (9) can be found in comparison to statements that emphasise (25) the fact that a majority of the Northern Irish population voted ‘leave’ in the EU-referendum. The reasoning behind this difference in frequency is quite obvious. Indeed, the most efficient method to de-emphasise a fact is to simply keep quiet about it and focus on other topics in one’s speech or statement.

When the DUP or the UUP do address the voting results, they shift the focus towards the United Kingdom as a whole. This approach has two major advantages. Firstly, the topic of the referendum results is not shunned, but no particular emphasise is put on Northern Ireland either. Secondly, these parties can promote their unionist beliefs in an implicit manner.

- *The European Union - which we have voted to leave ... (DUP2)*
- *Once the UK as a whole voted to leave, ... (UUP6)*

Nevertheless, a speaker for the DUP touches on the topic of Northern Ireland twice, but the disagreements are almost dismissed as negligible and futile:

- *At home, we may not have agreed on the 'leave or remain' issue but... (DUP2)*
- *But, whether we voted to leave or voted to remain, ... (DUP4)*

Lastly, the DUP party leader Arlene Foster is not afraid to display her personal position in the Brexit debate as illustrated in the following example:

- *As someone who argued for the UK to leave the EU, ... (DUP2)*

Frame 2.1: unity within Northern Ireland

a: statements that emphasise the frame

The frame ‘unity within Northern Ireland’ was equally highlighted by nationalists and unionists. This pattern could be categorised as predictable. Ever since the signing of the Good Friday Agreement, Northern Ireland has been able to maintain a stable yet precarious peace climate. De-emphasising that unity would come across as undermining that Northern Irish stability. Whatever the outcome of Brexit, all political parties understand the vital importance of unity within Northern Ireland. That cross-party view is clearly reflected throughout the speeches as several topics re-emerge.

Firstly, a majority of the speakers believe it is crucial that both nationalists and unionists work together for a new and improved Northern Ireland.

- *Unionists must have the same sense of ownership as Irish nationalists and Republicans. So we are looking to build something entirely novel, entirely new and commonly shared. (SF6)*
- *Now is the time to work together and to grasp the opportunities which exist (DUP2)*

b: statements that de-emphasise the frame

The DUP is the only party to formulate a few de-emphasise statements:

- *At home, we may not have agreed on the 'leave or remain' issue ... (DUP2)*

The message of this statement, however, does not come across as negative. This speaker does not have the intention to question the unity within Northern Ireland. Otherwise, it would be contradictory for the DUP to also emphasise this frame. The statement can be labelled as merely an observation. The politician is aware that no general consensus was reached in Northern Ireland following the EU-referendum. The speaker, however, may want to clarify that the different voting results should not have an impact on the unity within Northern Ireland.

Frame 2.2: unity between the UK and Northern Ireland

a: statements that emphasise the frame

The future role of Northern Ireland is one of the key points of the Brexit-negotiations. Depending on which terms the UK will leave the EU, the position of Northern Ireland within the UK might drastically change (see frame 4.1, 4.2 and 5). Whether the political parties see Northern Ireland’s future as part of the UK depends on their ideology.

As mentioned in the Results chapter, this was the most frequent discussed frame out of the entire corpus (75 times emphasised). The fact that the vast majority of these statements belong to the unionists and more in particular to the DUP is no surprise. According to their party lines, Northern Ireland is an intrinsic part of the UK and should therefore not be separated. Moreover, it could be stated that the DUP is morally obligated to stress this notion of unity due to its confidence and supply agreement with the British government.

The unionist speaker evokes the following arguments to emphasise the frame:

A) Northern Ireland and the UK are not only linked on a social, cultural and political level.

They also have a strong shared history:

- *It is about a shared history going back generations and hundreds of years, it is about a shared cultural experience which encompasses the newspapers that we read, the television we watch and the football teams we support. (DUP2)*

B) When the UK leaves the EU, it will be as a whole. The integrity of the UK should be prioritised.

- *The Democratic Unionist Party has repeatedly and consistently made clear that Northern Ireland must leave the European Union on the same terms as the rest of the United Kingdom. (DUP3)*
- *For me the importance of the EU, whether in it or how we leave it, ranks as a distant second to the importance of the United Kingdom. (DUP2)*

C) This unity should not even be questioned, it makes ‘sense’/ it is ‘sensible’.

- *That is not even a choice because, off course we are part of the United Kingdom. (DUP5)*
- *So, if, in economic terms, it makes sense for us to stay with the United Kingdom, rather than to stay with the Irish Republic. And in political terms, off course, as a unionist, I wish to remain part of the United Kingdom. (DUP5)*

b: statements that de-emphasise the frame

This frame was de-emphasised 15 times by nationalist speakers. Although this accounts for more than half of the de-emphasising statements, it is far less than the high number of emphasising ones by unionists. This difference in ratio could potentially be attributed to a well-considered strategy. When focussing too much on de-emphasising this notion of unity, the speaker might come across rather negatively. Consequently, these politicians might prefer to shift the focus of their speech to another type of unity. A potential example is the relationship with the Republic of Ireland.

Frame 2.3: unity between the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland

Whereas frame 2.2 was emphasised mostly by unionist speakers, the unity between the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland is a key point in the speeches of the nationalist speakers. Aside from the qualitative analysis, it is also important to examine and compare text fragments from both political sides. Indeed, the nationalist speakers focus primarily on the prospect of a reunited Ireland. Unionists, however, portray the bond between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland as friendly. A relationship that can provide economic advantages for both countries in the future:

- *Let us imagine that new Ireland, a reconciled Ireland, a modern Ireland in which citizens have equal rights and respect. An Ireland where identities, British, Irish and others, are shared and celebrated. (SF6)*
- *Because of the remaining EU members, nobody is in any doubt that Ireland will be our best friend and potentially our biggest advocates and they will be on the other side of the negotiating table. (UUP1)*

Although the nationalist speakers roughly address the same topics with regards to frame 2.3., small differences in content can be noted. Sinn Féin and the SDLP both discuss the need to take matters into their own hands. They look to the Republic of Ireland for help. The term ‘an all-island view’ is repeated several times:

- *So as Gerry has correctly said, we look to Dublin for support in this. We look to the Taoiseach to stand up for the democratically expressed wishes of the people of the North who have made it absolutely clear that under no circumstances do we want to leave the European Union. (SF1)*
- *Finally, the Taoiseach has to have an all island view. This affects all of Ireland, whatever about our attitude to the Constitutional position or to the Union or to any of these other matters, this affects everybody on this island. So, the Taoiseach has to have an all island view. (SF1)*

Nonetheless, Sinn Féin displays a sense of frustration. On multiple occasions, the British government is blamed for its lack of concern for Northern Ireland. The SDLP speakers do not mention this aspect and focus on the idea of taking their responsibility.

- *They (= the British government) embarked on this course of action without given consideration to the political, social and economic impact on the island of Ireland. (SF2)*
- *Ireland must find its own answers to all of these questions. (SDLP2)*

Lastly, Sinn Féin speakers are the only one to launch the idea of a referendum on Irish unity. As mentioned before with frame 1a, Sinn Féin speaks about its goal of a united Ireland far more explicitly than the SDLP does.

- *Sinn Féin, unlike the Taoiseach, would like to see a referendum on Irish unity within the next five years. (SF4)*

Frame 2.4: unity between the UK and the European Union

a: statements that emphasise the frame

This frame was one of the least emphasised throughout the entire corpus. This apparent indifference to the unity with the European Union might be because the Northern Irish politicians feel less involved in that unity and are more consumed with the impact of Brexit on Northern Ireland. Nevertheless, Sinn Féin has expressed its desire to be united with the Republic of Ireland and thus remain part of the EU. Consequently, we had anticipated that Sinn Féin politicians would commit themselves more to the topic of unity with the EU.

b: statements that de-emphasise the frame

4 of the 6 de-emphasising statements were found in speeches by the DUP. Due to its confidence and supply agreement with the British government, the party might feel obliged to adopt the government's position with regards to the unity with the EU. This argument was also used to explain the high number of DUP statements that emphasise the unity between the UK and Northern Ireland (frame 2.2).

Frame 2.5: unity between the UK and the Republic of Ireland

The unity between the UK and the Republic of Ireland is not discussed in great detail by the Northern Irish politicians. This is a logical pattern when taking the ideology of each party into consideration. On the one hand, as nationalists advocate for a reunited Ireland, they will naturally focus on the relationship between the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland. Unionists on the other hand, will portray the Republic of Ireland more like a trade partner with whom the relationship should be sustained. This is evidenced by the following example:

- *If the Irish Government are serious about not harming the interests of the people of Northern Ireland, then it is up to them to work with – not against – the UK Government in finding solutions that ensure a frictionless border on the island after the United Kingdom exits the EU. (UUP7)*

Moreover, the DUP often refers to the Republic of Ireland as part of the British Isles. In these statements, the DUP makes it clear that the UK's relationship with these Isles should not change due to the UK's withdrawal from the EU.

- *And our mutual interests will not end on the day the UK formally leaves the European Union. The United Kingdom may be leaving the EU but the common interests that we share across the British Isles will remain. (DUP4)*

Frame 2.5 was only de-emphasised once.

Frame 3: The Good Friday Agreement is in danger

There is a strong general consensus on the Good Friday Agreement as all 4 parties exclusively emphasise this frame. This outcome was foreseeable as the Good Friday Agreement has guaranteed peace in Northern Ireland for more than 20 years. Undermining this Agreement would once more unleash a state of civil unrest in the country. The speakers are well aware of this ‘danger’ and therefore emphasise that it is in everybody’s interest to preserve the Agreement.

- *I hope that we see practical solutions put on the table and remind people again that it is in our interest in Britain and Ireland to protect the peace process and the Good Friday Agreement. (SF6)*

In the eyes of these Northern Irish politicians, the Good Friday Agreement is very important and almost ‘sacred’. These words of substance can be found in the following examples:

- *Now, whatever your political view, there is a collective and agreed position in Ireland that Good Friday is sacrosanct. (SF4)*
- *In Northern Ireland, the Good Friday Agreement is sovereign. (SDLP3)*

Whereas Sinn Féin speakers stress the danger Brexit poses to the Good Friday Agreement, the SDLP is openly critical of the British government.

- *And they voted to stay for very practical and for very obvious reasons, that Brexit is incompatible with the Good Friday Agreement and the peace process. (SF5)*

Indeed, the SDLP speakers accuse the British government of indifference towards the preservation of the Good Friday Agreement. This counteracts with the attitude they adopted for most of the frames. In frame 1 and 2.3, Sinn Féin politicians are the ones who do not shy away from tendentious choice of words or explicit criticism on the British government.

By changing their attitude, the SDLP speakers make it very clear that they greatly value the importance of the Good Friday Agreement.

- *As I have said over recent weeks, a post-Brexit world could also mean a post-Good Friday Agreement world. The British government has shown no understanding or even interest in the significance of this reality (SDLP, speech 2)*

Frame 4.1: acceptable/preferable hard border

a: statements that emphasise the frame

As indicated in the quantitative analysis, there is only one party that emphasises the acceptability of a hard border, namely the DUP. 5 out of the 6 text fragments came out of a

statement by Sammy Wilson, the Brexit spokesperson for the DUP. It is remarkable, however, that the DUP both emphasised and de-emphasised the idea of a hard border. Does this contradiction imply that Sammy Wilson did not follow the party lines? Upon closely examining the content of his statements, it becomes clear that a certain degree of nuance needs to be taken into consideration.

In his statement, Sammy Wilson explains that there are different ways to interpret the notion of a ‘hard border’:

- *“Well, I think this term, a hard border, needs to be defined. Those who speak about a hard border think about checkpoints on every road going in and out of Northern Ireland, surveillance on those roads, every vehicle stopped, searched, etc. That is not what is. I think of what. And I have not spoken to Boris Johnson about it. But the more I see what was in the letter, what he was saying is: yes, off course there will be ways of checking trade across the border. It does not mean that you have to stop vehicles. It does not mean that you have to have physical barriers across roads. There are means of doing that. Some people have described it more as a virtual border rather than a physical border. (DUP5)*

b: statements that de-emphasise the frame

Sinn Féin strongly dislikes the idea of a hard border. They prefer not to have any type of border at all. This position is clearly expressed in the following statement:

- *The aim of the European Union, if I may say so, should be to prevent a land frontier between the European Union and Britain on the island of Ireland. That should be the key objective and the priority to prevent that land frontier on our island. (SF3)*

The main reason why Sinn Féin is so opposed to a hard border can be identified once more in its party ideology. A hardening of the border would imply that Northern Ireland became ‘cut off’ from the Republic of Ireland. For this nationalist party that envisions a reunited Ireland, that would be the worst-case scenario.

The notion of a hard border is intrinsically linked to the option of a soft border which is the topic of frame 4.1.

Frame 4.2: acceptable/preferable soft border

10 text fragments could be identified as statements in which the notion of a soft border is accepted. The DUP is responsible for the majority. The party’s speaker mainly focusses on the economic advantages of a soft border: free movement of trades and persons.

- *The DUP is committed to a Brexit that delivers stability and new benefits for people living and working right across Northern Ireland. We have been clear in saying that this means finding a solution that keeps the border open and seamless for travel and trade. (DUP1)*

Only one emphasising statement could be linked to the nationalist side. This is a rather unexpectedly low number for the nationalist parties. As Sinn Féin and the SDLP accounted for 16 statements that rejected the notion of a hard border, it would have been logical for these parties to have strongly emphasised the acceptability of a soft border. It is indeed the opposite option. The fact that no nationalist party really engaged in this discussion may suggest a certain degree of indecisiveness. From the analysis of frame 4.1, we can conclude that Sinn Féin and the SDLP are clearly against the notion of a hard border. However, when it comes to the idea of a soft border, their opinion is far less outspoken. This might indicate the nationalist parties do not have a clear vision of what the alternative to a hard border should be.

No de-emphasising statements on the topic of a soft border could be identified throughout the corpus.

Frame 5: acceptable/preferable special status for Northern Ireland

a: statements that emphasise the frame

Sinn Féin is the only party to express its support for a special status. This outcome does not come as a surprise because Sinn Féin is a nationalist party that advocates for a reunited Ireland. A special status would imply that Northern Ireland's legislation were to be adapted to match the Irish laws. By doing so, trading would remain possible between the two countries after the UK's withdrawal from the EU. Sinn Féin is a strong advocate for a special status as it would consolidate the relationship between the two countries on the Irish Isle. This argument is explicitly formulated in the following example:

- *Designated special status for the North to remain inside the European Union will ensure that Ireland is treated as a single entity and that is the better for all of us. (SF4)*

Moreover, the Sinn Féin speaker stresses that it is the only option to prevent a hard border on the Irish Isle, a scenario which has proven to be unpopular amongst the other Northern Irish parties (see frame 4.1).

The comparison between emphasising statements by Sinn Féin and the SDLP on the topic of a special status for Northern Ireland, demonstrates once more that Sinn Féin speakers have a tendency to be more outspoken on certain topics. This was also the case with frame 1 and 2.3.

b: statements that de-emphasise the frame

The unionist parties adopt a complete opposite position compared to Sinn Féin. The DUP and the UUP strongly oppose to the idea of a special status. Their arguments are closely linked to the reason why Sinn Féin is in favour of this option. A statute that grants Northern Ireland the same trading conditions and legislation as the Republic of Ireland, is simply no option for unionists. It would fracture the legal unity within the UK. The DUP and UUP will do whatever it takes to remain an intrinsic part of the UK. Consequently, they fear that a special status for Northern Ireland might endanger that unity.

- *Whether it be in terms of transition or future trade relations with those in the Single Market, Northern Ireland must be treated in the same fashion as the rest of the UK. (DUP1)*

Conclusion

This dissertation was written in order to answer the following research question: ‘How do Northern Irish politicians voice their opinion concerning the impact of Brexit on Northern Ireland?’ A corpus was compiled out of 21 speeches by politicians of the four main political parties in Northern Ireland: Sinn Féin (SF), the Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP), the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) and the Ulster Unionist Party (UUP). We decided upon this type of data in order to examine the Northern Irish politicians’ opinion in the most authentic and complete manner possible. The selected speeches and statements were delivered within a time frame of 22 months. The critical discourse methodology ‘framing’ was used to analyse the data. Based on an initial read-through of the corpus, the following frames were selected:

- 1) *Majority of Northern Ireland voted to remain*
- 2) *Idea of unity*
 - 2.1 *Unity within Northern Ireland*
 - 2.2 *Unity between UK and Northern Ireland*
 - 2.3 *Unity between the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland*
 - 2.4 *Unity between the UK and the European Union*
 - 2.5 *Unity between UK and the Republic of Ireland*
- 3) *Good Friday Agreement is in danger*
- 4) *The Irish border issue*
 - 4.1 *Acceptable/ preferable hard border*
 - 4.2 *Acceptable/ preferable soft border*
- 5) *Acceptable/ preferable special status for Northern Ireland*

Subsequently, we selected text fragments from the speeches that either emphasised or de-emphasised one of these frames. Both a quantitative and qualitative analysis was carried out on each frame individually. The conclusions we draw from these results enable us to formulate an answer to our main research question and reject or accept our hypotheses with regard to the position of the parties towards certain frames.

First hypothesis: The republican parties, Sinn Féin and the SDLP, will potentially pay more attention to this majority vote in Northern Ireland in order to highlight the differences between Northern Ireland and the UK in their speeches.

This hypothesis can be confirmed as only the nationalist parties emphasised this frame. When addressing the 56% majority vote in Northern Ireland, the nationalist politicians often refer to the notion of democracy. They stress that the people of Northern Ireland have not given their consent to leave the EU. ‘Being dragged out of the EU’ is one of the strong expressions used by the nationalist parties to indicate their discontent with the British government.

It should be stated that in general, Sinn Féin in general takes a clearer stance in comparison to the SDLP. Although both nationalist parties advocate for a reunited Ireland, Sinn Féin is more outspoken about its nationalistic beliefs and has a tendency to openly criticise the British government. This is clearly demonstrated in frame 1 (majority vote), 2.3 (unity between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland) and 5 (special status Northern Ireland). Only in terms of the Good Friday Agreement (frame 3) does the SDLP not shy away from criticizing the British government.

Second hypothesis: the unionist parties, DUP and UUP, will potentially downplay this Northern Irish majority vote and underline the majority 'leave' vote in the whole of the United Kingdom to safeguard the Union.

Indeed, the unionist parties de-emphasised the majority vote in Northern Ireland by using the most obvious approach: they did not mention it at all and focussed on other topics in their speeches. In general, the DUP and UUP mainly focussed on the UK as a whole, rather than solely stressing Northern Ireland's identity. Moreover, as the DUP has a confidence and supply agreement with the British government, the party's politicians might feel obliged to adopt and defend the same point of views.

Third hypothesis: As the preservation of the Good Friday Agreement could potentially come under threat due to the effects of Brexit, the majority of the Northern Irish political parties would most likely emphasise its value.

The results from both the quantitative as qualitative analysis clearly indicate a strong general consensus on this topic. All four parties believe that it is crucial to work together in order to protect the Good Friday Agreement, which is often referred to as 'sacred'. Both nationalists and unionists indicate that they are aware of the danger that Brexit poses to its preservation.

Moreover, nationalists and unionists also agree on a number of other topics. The frame 'unity within Northern Ireland' was equally highlighted by both parties. As the positive impact of the Peace Process and the Belfast Agreement is still very much present in Northern Irish collective memory, the parties clearly want to maintain that sense of Northern Irish unity.

Overall, not one party defends the idea of a hard border. However, the alternative solution of a soft border evokes more contrary views. Therefore, it can be stated that the parties do not want to see a hardening of the border on the Irish Isle, yet they have not reached a consensus on the conditions for the practical implementation of a soft border.

As a way of answering the main research question, we can conclude that the politicians' argumentation that was used to emphasise or de-emphasise the frames essentially amount to one topic: Northern Ireland's position within the UK after Brexit. Nationalists want to see a unification between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. This counteracts with the unionists' position who see Northern Ireland as an intrinsic part of the UK and should therefore not be separated. This ideology is the foundation upon which the argumentation is built for all the frames with regard to the notion of unity, for the frame concerning a hard or soft border and for the frame that discusses a special status for Northern Ireland.

This corpus comprised speeches and statements that were delivered shortly after the EU-referendum and during the Brexit negotiations. At that particular period in time, the Northern Irish politicians could only debate on the potential consequences following Brexit. For example, no concrete decisions had already been taken on the implementation of a hard or soft border. The true impact will only be felt after 29 March 2019. In light of future research, it would be useful to once more perform a framing analysis on speeches and statements by the same political parties in the fall of 2019. A comparison between the two researches might provide us with new insights. Do the previously determined frames still receive the same amount of attention? Have the politicians changed their opinion on some of the topics? Have new frames been added?

The answer to these questions remains uncertain as the context surrounding Brexit changes on a daily basis. In the spring of 2019, the UK will settle into its new life outside the EU. Only then will Northern Irish politicians be able to assess the impact of Brexit on Northern Ireland.

Bibliography

Adelman, P. & Byrne, M. (2017). *Access to History: Great Britain and the Irish Question 1774-1923 Fourth Edition*. Hachette UK. Retrieved from https://books.google.be/books?id=FuQqCgAAQBAJ&printsec=frontcover&hl=nl&source=gb_s_ge_summary_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false

Aftab, A. (2016, June 24). Referendum result would have been entirely different had votes been allowed at 16. [webpage]. Retrieved August 9, 2018 from <http://www.independent.co.uk/student/news/eu-referendum-uk-result-students-votes-at-16-remain-brexite-leave-a7101821.html>

Arnoudt, R. (2018, February 28). May: 'EU-voorstel voor grens Noord-Ierland bedreiging voor eenheid Verenigd Koninkrijk'. [webpage]. Retrieved August 9, 2018 from <https://www.vrt.be/vrtnws/nl/2018/02/28/may---eu-voorstel-voor-grens-noord-ierland-bedeiging-voor-eehe/>

Arowolo, S. (2017). *UNDERSTANDING FRAMING THEORY*. [s.l.], [s.d.], 1-3. doi: 10.13140/RG.2.2.25800.52482

BBC News. (2016, June 24). Eight reasons Leave won the UK's referendum on the EU. [webpage]. Retrieved May 7, 2018 from <http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-politics-eu-referendum-36574526>

BBC History. (2018). Republican hunger strikes in the Maze prison. [webpage]. Retrieved 23 May 23, 2018 from http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/events/republican_hunger_strikes_maze

BBC History. (2018). The Good Friday Agreement. [webpage]. Retrieved May 24, 2018 from http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/events/good_friday_agreement

BBC History. (2018). The Troubles. [webpage]. Retrieved April 29, 2018 from <http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/troubles>

BBC News. (1993). Understanding Northern Ireland: Downing Street Declaration. [webpage]. Retrieved May 24, 2018 from http://news.bbc.co.uk/hi/english/static/northern_ireland/understanding/events/downing_street.stm

BBC News. (2012, January 11). Northern Ireland profile. [webpage]. Retrieved May 24, 2018 from http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/country_profiles/4172307.stm

BBC News. (2016, February 20). EU referendum timeline: Countdown to the vote. [webpage]. Retrieved June 24, 2018 from <http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-politics-33141819>

BBC News. (2016, May 16). EU referendum: The view from a floating EU voter. [webpage]. Retrieved April 28, 2018 from <http://www.bbc.com/news/av/uk-politics-eu-referendum-36305972/eu-referendum-the-view-from-a-floating-voter>

- BBC News. (2016, June 24). EU referendum: Northern Ireland votes to Remain. [webpage]. Retrieved April 30, 2018 from <http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-northern-ireland-36614443>
- BBC News. (2017, March 29). Brexit : Article 50 has been triggered-What happens now? [webpage]. Retrieved June 24, 2018 from <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-39143978>
- BBC News. (2018). EU Referendum Results. [webpage]. Retrieved August 8, 2018 from https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/politics/eu_referendum/results
- BBC News. (2018, March 23). Brexit: Jargon-busting guide to the key terms. [webpage]. Retrieved June 24, 2018 from <http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-43470987>
- BBC News. (2018, March 26). Brexit timeline: Uk's departure from the EU. [webpage]. Retrieved June 23, 2018 from <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-43546199>
- Bradley, K. (2018, April 10). Secretary of State 'Building Peace' speech. [webpage]. Retrieved August 8, 2018 from <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/secretary-of-state-building-peace-speech>
- CAIN. (2018, January 2). CAIN: Chronology of Key Events 1170 to 1967. [webpage]. Retrieved May 21, 2018 from <http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/othelem/chron/ch67.htm#1603>
- CAIN. (2018, January 2). CAIN: Events: Anglo-Irish Agreement - Summary. [webpage]. Retrieved May 24, 2018 from <http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/events/aia/sum.htm>
- Darby, J. (2003). Northern Ireland: The background to the Peace Process, by John Darby (2003). [webpage]. Retrieved May 24, 2018 from <http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/events/peace/darby03.htm>
- De Roy, L. (2016, June 24). Van Rompuy: 'Het voelt aan als een amputatie'. [webpage]. Retrieved April 29, 2018 from <http://derefactie.be/cm/vrtnieuws/buitenland/2.43059?eid=1.2695104>
- De Vos, V. (2018, October 4). 20 jaar Goedevrijdagakkoord in Noord-Ierland: brengt de brexit de vrede opnieuw in gevaar? [webpage]. Retrieved August 8, 2018 from <https://www.vrt.be/vrtnws/nl/2018/03/30/20-jaar-goede-vrijdagakkoord-in-noord-ierland/>
- DeMorgen. (2017, March 20). Wat houdt dat beruchte 'artikel 50' eigenlijk in? [webpage]. Retrieved August 9, 2018 from <https://www.demorgen.be/buitenland/wat-houdt-dat-beruchte-artikel-50-eigenlijk-in-b93c8910/>
- Donnchadha, P. M. (2017, March 21). The Society of United Irishmen. [webpage]. Retrieved August 8, 2018 from <https://www.yourirish.com/history/18th-century/the-society-of-united-irishmen>
- Donnchadha, P. M. (2013, March 18). The forming of the Black & Tans. [webpage]. Retrieved May 22, 2018 from <https://www.yourirish.com/history/20th-century/the-forming-of-the-black-and-tans>

Donnchadha, P. M. (2013, April 15). The Irish Civil War (1922-1923). [webpage]. Retrieved May 23, 2018 from <https://www.yourirish.com/history/20th-century/irish-civil-war>

Dorney, J. (2011, November 21). Today in Irish History, Bloody Sunday, 21 November 1920. [webpage]. Retrieved May 22, 2018 from <http://www.theirishstory.com/2011/11/21/today-in-irish-history-bloody-sunday-november-21-1920/>

Dorney, J. (2012, September 18). The Irish War of Independence – A Brief Overview. [webpage]. Retrieved May 22, 2018 from <http://www.theirishstory.com/2012/09/18/the-irish-war-of-independence-a-brief-overview/>

Eastwood, C. (2018, September 4). SDLP Leader Colum Eastwood's Conference Speech. [webpage]. Retrieved August 8, 2018 from <http://www.sdlp.ie/news/2018/sdlp-leader-conference-speech/>

English, R. (2004). *Armed Struggle: The History of the IRA*. Oxford University Press. Retrieved from https://books.google.be/books/about/Armed_Struggle.html?id=WxJutBLDxg0C&redir_esc=y

European Union. (2016, June 16). A peaceful Europe – the beginnings of cooperation - EUROPA [webpage]. Retrieved May 6, 2018 from https://europa.eu/european-union/about-eu/history/1945-1959_en

European Union. (2016, July 5). United Kingdom - EUROPA [webpage]. Retrieved May 6, 2018 from https://europa.eu/european-union/about-eu/countries/member-countries/unitedkingdom_en

Fairclough, N. (2003). *Analysing discourse: textual analysis for social research*. London : Routledge.

Fitzpatrick, H. (1812). *A Statement of the Penal Laws, which Aggrieve the Catholics of Ireland*. [s.l.]: [s.n.]. Retrieved from https://books.google.be/books?id=AS8PAAAAQAAJ&printsec=frontcover&hl=nl&source=gbs_ge_summary_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false

Gallagher, P. (2017, April 20). General Election 2017: Where the main parties in Northern Ireland stand on key issues. [webpage]. Retrieved June 22, 2018 from <https://inews.co.uk/news/politics/general-election-2017-northern-ireland-political-parties/>

Goffman, E. (1986). *Frame analysis: an essay on the organisation of experience*. Boston: Northeastern University Press edition. Retrieved from <https://is.muni.cz/el/1423/podzim2013/SOC571E/um/E.Goffman-FrameAnalysis.pdf>

Gráda, C. Ó. (2000). *Black '47 and Beyond: The Great Irish Famine in History, Economy, and Memory*. Princeton University Press. Retrieved from https://books.google.be/books?id=sH-J4WxqknkC&printsec=frontcover&hl=nl&source=gbs_ge_summary_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false

Hagen, G. (2002). *Van 'We shall overcome' tot 'The soldier's song': hoe eind jaren zestig het conflict tussen protestanten en katholieken in Noord-Ierland oplaaide en escaleerde.*

Uitgeverij Verloren. Retrieved from

https://books.google.be/books?id=7geVSzqyIC8C&printsec=frontcover&dq=7geVSzqyIC8C&hl=nl&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwim6bX_-d_cAhXOzqQKHTXRAFgQ6AEIKDAA#v=onepage&q&f=false

Helm, T. (2016, June 11). Third of EU referendum voters won't make up their minds until week before poll. [webpage]. Retrieved May 23, 2018 from <http://www.theguardian.com/politics/2016/jun/11/brexit-eu-referendum-vote-last-minute-decision-decide-lse>

Hunt, A., & Wheeler, B. (2018, April 12). Brexit: All you need to know. [webpage]. Retrieved May 22, 2018 from <http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-politics-32810887>

Jennings, C. (n.d.). A Short History of...The Northern Ireland conflicts. [webpage]. Retrieved May 23, 2018 from http://traveldocumentaries.co.uk/destination_guide/europe/ireland/northern_ireland_conflict.php

Knuts, S. (2018). Een zondag en een vrijdag in 1972. *Knack Historia: Van Empire tot Brexit*, 177.

Knuts, S. (2018). Ja tegen Europa: het referendum van 1975. *Knack Historia: Van Empire tot Brexit*, 177.

MacMillan, M. (2009, September 11). Rebuilding the world after the second world war. [webpage]. Retrieved June 8, 2018 from <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2009/sep/11/second-world-war-rebuilding>

Mason, R. (2016, June 24). How did UK end up voting to leave the European Union? [webpage]. Retrieved June 23, 2018 from <http://www.theguardian.com/politics/2016/jun/24/how-did-uk-end-up-voting-leave-european-union>

Melaugh, M. (2012, August 29). CAIN: Issues: Politics: Political Parties in Northern Ireland. [webpage]. Retrieved August 8, 2018 from <http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/issues/politics/parties.htm>

Millar, P. (2018, August 4). Twenty years after the Good Friday Agreement, Northern Ireland's future is imperilled by Brexit. [webpage]. Retrieved April 30, 2018 from http://www.independent.co.uk/news/long_reads/good-friday-agreement-twenty-years-northern-ireland-brexit-peace-ira-blair-adams-mcguinness-paisley-a8290746.html

Morris, C. (2017, November 30). Reality Check: The Brexit border question. [webpage]. Retrieved April 28, 2018 from <http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-politics-42180074>

- Nationalia. (2016, February 23). Exiting the EU? Algeria, Greenland and Saint Barthélemy experiences. [webpage]. Retrieved April 28, 2018 from <https://www.nationalia.info/new/10722/exiting-the-eu-algeria-greenland-and-saint-barthelemy-experiences>
- Ollevier, I. (2016, March 26). Paasopstand 1916: de stichtingsmythe van Ierland. [webpage]. Retrieved May 21, 2018 from <http://deredactie.be/cm/vrtnieuws/14-18/1.2608062>
- O'Neill, B. (2018). Events of Bloody Sunday in Derry Jan 30 1972 - History of Ireland. [webpage]. Retrieved May 23, 2018 from <https://www.yourirish.com/history/20th-century/bloody-sunday-1972>
- O'Toole, E. (2013, January 25). Why can't Great Britain look Northern Ireland in the eye? | Emer O'Toole. [webpage]. Retrieved May 22, 2018 from <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2013/jan/25/great-britain-northern-ireland-belfast-rioting>
- Paelinck, G. (2016, June 25). Britse kranten: tussen vreugde en vrees. [webpage]. Retrieved April 28, 2018 from <http://deredactie.be/cm/vrtnieuws/buitenland/2.43059?eid=1.2695208>
- Panizza, R. (2018). The Treaty of Lisbon | EU fact sheets | European Parliament. [webpage]. Retrieved April 28, 2018 from http://www.europarl.europa.eu/atyourservice/en/displayFtu.html?ftuId=FTU_1.1.5.html
- Raats, J. (2018). De Iron Lady wil haar geld terug. Thatchers harde opstelling in Europa. *Knack Historia: Van empire tot Brexit*, 177.
- Raats, J. (2018). Een ongewenst lid? De Britse toetreding tot de Europese Gemeenschap. *Knack Historia: Van empire tot Brexit*, 177.
- Raats, J. (2018). Troubles in het noorden. De loden jaren van Noord-Ierland. *Knack Historia, : Van empire tot Brexit*, 177.
- Rex, R. (2006). *Henry VIII and the English Reformation*. Macmillan International Higher Education. Retrieved from <https://books.google.be/books?id=CpkcBQAAQBAJ&printsec=frontcover&dq=Google-Books-ID:+CpkcBQAAQBAJ&hl=nl&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwiAnfSTgODcAhUHEVAKHfqCBlwQ6AEIKDAA#v=onepage&q=Google-Books-ID%3A%20CpkcBQAAQBAJ&f=false>
- Santens, T. & De Graeve, R. (2017, August 12). Brexit van referendum tot exit: een tijdslijn. [webpage]. Retrieved August 9, 2018 from <https://www.vrt.be/vrtnws/nl/2017/12/08/brexit-van-begin-tot-einde--een-tijdslijn/>
- Sax, A. (2018). Een premature republiek: van Paasopstand tot onafhankelijke staat. *Knack Historia: Van Empire tot Brexit*, 177.

Syal, R. (2017, June 26). The Conservative/DUP deal: what it says and what it means. [webpage]. Retrieved June 10, 2018 from <http://www.theguardian.com/politics/2017/jun/26/the-conservativedup-deal-what-it-says-and-what-it-means>

Tonge, J. (2013). *Northern Ireland: conflict and change* (Second edition 2002). Routledge. Retrieved from [https://scholar.google.be/scholar?q=Tonge,+J.+\(2013\).+Northern+Ireland:+conflict+and+change+\(Second+edition+2002\).+Routledge.&hl=nl&as_sdt=0&as_vis=1&oi=scholart](https://scholar.google.be/scholar?q=Tonge,+J.+(2013).+Northern+Ireland:+conflict+and+change+(Second+edition+2002).+Routledge.&hl=nl&as_sdt=0&as_vis=1&oi=scholart)

Torfs, M. (2017, May 12). Probleem met de Noord-Ierse grens is politiek onoplosbaar. [webpage]. Retrieved April 30, 2018 from <https://www.vrt.be/vrtnws/nl/2017/12/05/grenskwestie-noord-ierland-en-ierland/>

Vandenbussche, L. (2014). A2TK: deelsyllabus Kritische discoursanalyse. Unpublished syllabus. Universiteit Gent-Faculteit Letteren & Wijsbegeerte. Vakgroep Vertalen, Tolken en Communicatie.

Watt, N. (2013, January 23). David Cameron calls for UK exemption from EU's 'ever-closer' union. [webpage]. Retrieved August 8, 2018 from <http://www.theguardian.com/politics/2013/jan/23/david-cameron-uk-exemption-eu>

Weir, A. (2011). *The Six Wives Of Henry VIII*. London: Vintage Books. Retrieved from <https://books.google.be/books?id=M1yHXitDdyQC&printsec=frontcover&dq=Google-Books-ID:+M1yHXitDdyQC&hl=nl&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwi6tdKAguDcAhUNLVAKHalBDhgQ6AEIKDAA#v=onepage&q=Google-Books-ID%3A%20M1yHXitDdyQC&f=false>

Wilkinson, A. (2016, June 21). The Brexit Vote Is Really About Just One Thing. [webpage]. Retrieved June 10, 2018 from <https://newrepublic.com/article/134507/brexit-vote-really-just-one-thing>

Appendix

1. Tables and figures

Frame 1: Majority of Northern Ireland voted to remain

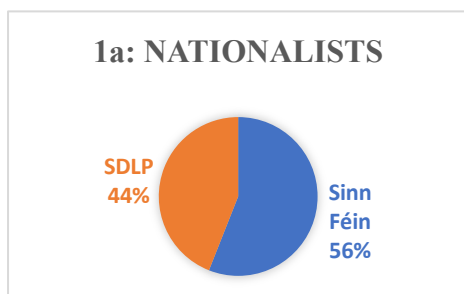


Fig. A1: 1a: nationalists

- 1a: unionists: no statements
- 1b: pie chart in text

Frame 2.1: unity within Northern Ireland



Fig. A2: 2.1a: nationalists

- 2.1a: unionists :pie chart in text
- 2.1b: only the DUP made 2 de-emphasising statements

Frame 2.2: unity between UK and Northern Ireland

- 2.2a: unionists: pie chart in text
- 2.2a: nationalists: only Sinn Féin made 2 emphasising statements
- 2.2b: unionists: only the DUP made 7 de-emphasising statements
- 2.2b: nationalists: pie chart in text

Frame 2.3: unity between The Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland

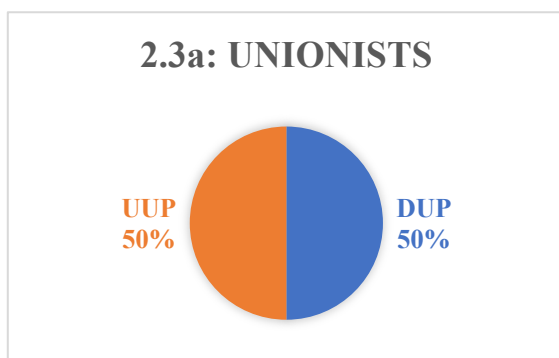


Fig. A3: 2.3a: unionists

- 2.3a: nationalists: pie chart in text
- 2.3b: nationalists: no de-emphasising statements were made

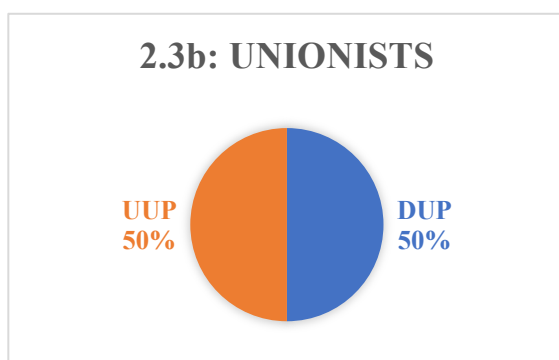


Fig. A4: 2.3b: unionists

Frame 2.4: unity between the UK and the European Union

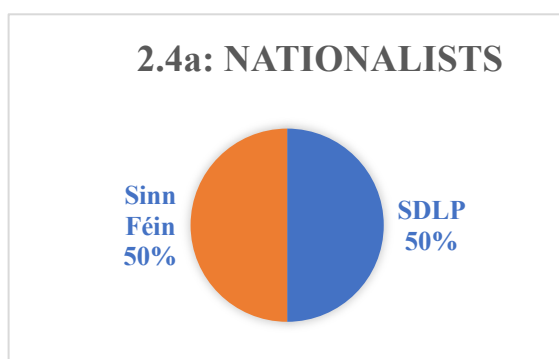


Fig. A5: 2.4a: nationalists

- 2.4a: unionists: only the DUP made 2 emphasising statements
- 2.4b: nationalists: only Sinn Féin made 1 de-emphasising statement

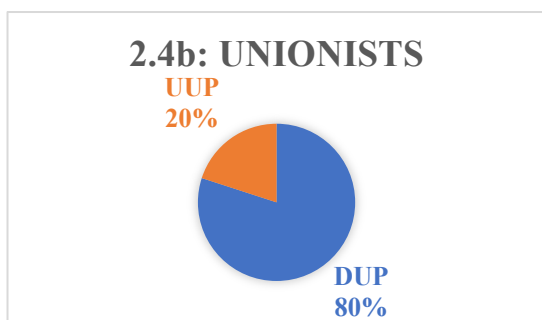


Fig. A6: 2.4b: unionists

Frame 2.5: unity between the UK and the Republic of Ireland



Fig. A7: 2.5a: nationalists

- 2.5a: unionists: pie chart in text
- 2.5b: nationalists: no de-emphasising statements were made
- 2.5b: unionists: only the DUP made 1 de-emphasising statement

Frame 3: The Good Friday Agreement is in danger



Fig. A8: 3.a: nationalists

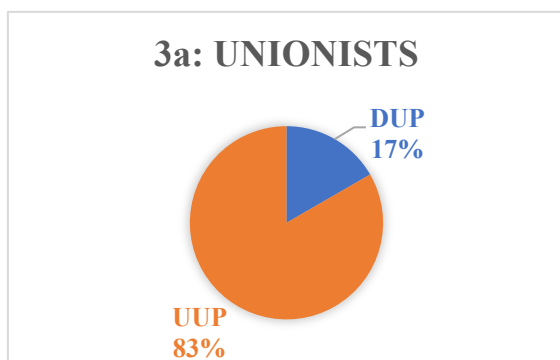


Fig. A9: 3.a: unionists

- 3b: nationalists: no de-emphasising statements were made
- 3b: unionists: no de-emphasising statements were made

Frame 4.1: acceptable/preferable hard border

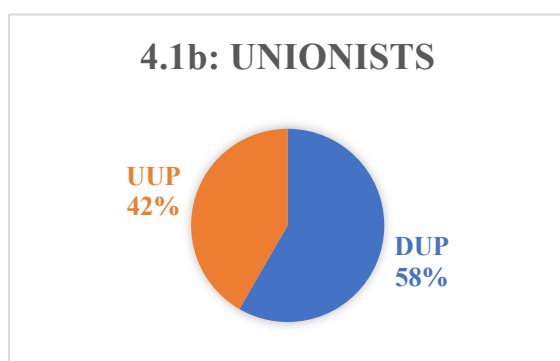


Fig. A10: 4.1b: unionists

- 4.1a: unionists: only the DUP made 6 emphasising statements
- 4.1a: nationalists: no emphasising statements were made
- 4.1b: nationalists: pie chart in text

Frame 4.2: acceptable/preferable soft border

- 4.2.a: unionists: pie chart in text
- 4.2.a: nationalists: only the SDLP made 1 emphasising statement
- 4.2b: nationalists: no de-emphasising statements were made
- 4.2b: unionists: no de-emphasising statements were made

Frame 5: acceptable/preferable special status for Northern Ireland

- 5a: nationalists: only Sinn Féin made 14 emphasising statements
- 5a: unionists: no emphasising statements were made
- 5b: nationalists: no de-emphasising statements were made
- 5b: unionists: pie chart in text

2. Quantitative analysis

	Texts										Frames									
	1a	1b	2.1a	2.1b	2.2a	2.2b	2.3a	2.3b	2.4a	2.4b	2.5a	2.5b	3a	3b	4.1a	4.1b	4.2a	4.2b	5a	5b
Sum F _{in} 1	4	0	1	0	0	0	1	4	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
2	3	0	1	0	0	0	5	4	1	1	0	0	4	0	0	0	2	0	0	2
3	2	0	0	0	0	0	2	7	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	2	0	0	6
4	2	0	1	0	0	0	2	16	0	0	1	0	3	0	0	0	2	0	0	3
5	3	0	1	0	0	0	0	9	0	0	0	0	8	0	0	0	7	0	0	3
6	0	0	1	0	0	2	0	3	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total SF	14	0	5	0	0	2	10	43	0	1	1	0	20	0	0	0	13	0	0	14
SDLP 1	6	0	0	0	0	0	3	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
2	4	0	3	0	0	0	2	10	0	0	0	0	4	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
3	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	4	0	0	4	0	5	0	0	0	2	0	0	0
Total SDLP	11	0	4	0	0	0	5	15	0	1	0	4	9	0	0	0	3	1	0	0
DUP 1	0	0	1	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
2	0	6	6	2	2	28	4	0	1	0	2	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	2
3	0	0	0	0	0	9	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	3	1	0	0
4	0	2	0	0	0	5	3	3	0	1	8	0	1	0	0	0	3	2	0	0
5	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	5	0	0	0	0	0
Total DUP	0	8	7	2	2	48	7	3	1	2	10	1	1	0	6	7	6	6	0	5
UUP 1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
2	0	0	0	0	0	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	3
3	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	2
4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
5	0	0	0	0	0	5	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
6	0	1	0	0	0	7	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	2	1	0	2
7	0	0	0	0	0	4	0	0	1	0	2	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
Total UUP	0	1	1	0	0	25	0	3	1	0	3	0	5	0	0	0	5	3	0	8
overall total	25	9	17	2	2	75	22	64	2	4	6	18	35	0	6	28	10	0	0	14

	<u>texts</u>										<u>Frames</u>									
	1a	1b	2.1a	2.1b	2.2a	2.2b	2.3a	2.3b	2.4a	2.4b	2.5a	2.5b	3a	3b	4.1a	4.1b	4.2a	4.2b	5a	5b
Sim Fin 1	4	4	0	1	0	0	1	4	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
2	3	0	0	1	0	0	5	4	0	1	1	0	4	0	0	0	2	0	0	0
3	2	0	0	0	0	0	2	7	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	2	0	0	6
4	2	0	1	0	0	0	2	16	0	0	1	0	3	0	0	0	2	0	0	3
5	3	0	1	0	0	0	0	9	0	0	0	0	8	0	0	0	7	0	0	3
6	0	0	1	0	0	2	0	3	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
DUP 1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
2	0	6	6	6	2	28	4	0	0	1	0	2	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	2
3	0	0	0	0	0	9	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	3	1	0	0
4	0	0	2	0	0	5	3	3	0	1	2	8	0	1	0	0	3	2	0	0
5	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	5	0	0	0	0
SDLP 1	6	0	0	0	0	0	3	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
2	4	0	0	3	0	0	2	10	0	0	0	0	4	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
3	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	4	0	0	4	0	5	0	0	0	2	0	0	0
UCP 1	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
2	0	0	0	0	0	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	3
3	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	2
4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
5	0	0	0	0	0	5	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
6	0	0	1	0	0	7	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	2	1	0	2
7	0	0	0	0	0	4	0	0	1	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
Total	25	9	17	2	75	22	64	2	4	6	18	1	35	0	6	28	10	0	14	13

Corpus: speeches and statements by Northern Irish politicians on the impact of Brexit on Northern Ireland

Summary

I. Sinn Féin

<i>Date</i>	<i>Speaker</i>	<i>Function</i>
24/06/2016	Gerry Adams & Martin McGuinness	Former party leader Sinn Féin
18/10/2016	Martin McGuinness	Former party leader Sinn Féin + former Deputy First Minister of Northern Ireland
11/05/2017	Gerry Adams	Former party leader Sinn Féin
22/09/2017	Mary Lou McDonald	Current party leader Sinn Féin
3/12/2017	David Cullinane	Brexit spokesperson for Sinn Féin
27/03/2018	Mary Lou McDonald	Current party leader Sinn Féin

II. Democratic Unionist Party (DUP)

<i>Date</i>	<i>Speaker</i>	<i>Function</i>
20/09/2017	Arlene Foster	Party leader DUP
22/05/2017	Arlene Foster	Party leader DUP
5/12/2017	Nigel Dodds	Deputy leader DUP
13/01/2018	Arlene Foster	Party leader DUP
27/02/2018	Sammy Wilson	Brexit spokesperson for the DUP

III. Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP)

<i>Date</i>	<i>Speaker</i>	<i>Function</i>
27/06/2016	Colum Eastwood	Party leader SDLP
30/09/2016	Colum Eastwood	Party leader SDLP
7/04/2018	Colum Eastwood	Party leader SDLP

IV. Ulster Unionist Party

<i>Date</i>	<i>Speaker</i>	<i>Function</i>
4/11/2016	Mike Nesbitt	Former Party leader Ulster Unionist Party
16/05/2017	Danny Kinahan	Member Ulster Unionist Party
22/06/2017	Robin Swann	Current Party Leader Ulster Unionist Party
28/07/2017	Jim Nicholson	Member Ulster Unionist Party + European Parliament
3/10/2017	Jim Nicholson	Member Ulster Unionist Party + European Parliament
5/12/2017	Robin Swann	Current Party Leader Ulster Unionist Party

(words or phrases highlighted in yellow = unclear/ difficult to understand)
(Irish phrases= not transcribed)

I. Sinn Féin

1. Gerry Adams : “British have no mandate for Brexit from the people of the North”

Date: 24/06/2016

Speaker: Gerry Adams & Martin McGuinness

Function speaker:

Link (video): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YaHyDw9TFWE>

Transcription

Gerry Adams TD

(former) Sinn Féin President

“What I want to say is directed mostly at the people who live on this island and that includes our unionist neighbors and those who voted for an exit. And it is also addressed to the British Prime Minister and the Irish Taoiseach. The people in the North voted to remain. That is very, very clear. That is the outcome of the referendum on this part of the island. And we made it clear in the course of the campaign that our interest, North and South, would not be served by one part of the island been out of the European Union and the other part of the island being in the European Union. And we stressed that because we have huge criticisms of the European Union which I think are justified. And there is obviously a wake-up call for the bureaucrats and the elites in the European Union to sort out the democratic deficit and to make it a more citizen-centered, rights-based European Union. For in terms of this island, Mister Cameron or whoever succeeds him have to accept the democratic outcome of this referendum in this part of Ireland. And everybody else who lives here has to accept that as well. And the British Prime Minister has no bond yet whatsoever to negotiate, or to speak for, or to deal with the European Commission, or any of the others there on behalf of people who live here.

Finally, the Taoiseach has to have an all island view. This affects all of Ireland, whatever about our attitude to the Constitutional position or to the Union or to any of these other matters, this affects everybody on this island. So, the Taoiseach has to have an all island view. He has to have that strategically, and he has to have that as part of any upcoming negotiations. But also, and most importantly, because we all are part of a process of bringing about equality and change and harmony and reconciliation here. Under the terms of the Good Friday Agreement, he also has to have this. Because, unless we are very careful, a lot of the hard work that has have been done, particularly around equality, particularly around rights, can be undone. And the Good Friday Agreement is an international treaty and it supersedes any decision taken in this referendum, to the Taoiseach as a coequal guarantor of that agreement has to make sure that none of it is undermined, or eroded, or subverted by those in London who want to do away with the important gains that have been made for citizens here.”

Martin McGuinness MLA
Joint First Minister, Northern Executive

“Our focus is clearly on the democratically expressed wishes of people here in the North. And achieving a 56 % vote was brought about as a result of unionists, nationalists and Republicans voted together to remain in Europe. So any decision to take us out of Europe is a big deal. It is a big crisis and we have to face the reality that it is a crisis. And that there needs to be a resolution of that, which is going to be very, very difficult given a decision taken by English voters on foot of a campaign that has been headed up by a “Little Englander” mentality and the hard right-wing of the Tory party. So this is big stuff for us. This is about the future, and it is about a decision which has effectively, in my view, undermined the good work of a **stone** in the Good Friday Agreement. So as Gerry has correctly said, we look to Dublin for support in this. We look to the Taoiseach to stand up for the democratically expressed wishes of the people of the North who have made it absolutely clear that under no circumstances do we want to leave the European Union. And the Taoiseach, I think, also has a duty and a responsibility to recognize, as the Scots have done and have clearly indicated, that this is of such fundamental importance, that there is, in all probability, a second Scottish referendum on independence on the agenda. Well, what the Taoiseach needs to understand, is that we do believe that there is **now against** the backdrop of this decision, which has been so detrimental to everybody on this **island** for a border poll. People say when we raise the issue of the border poll: would that not create instability? Would it not lead to a very fractious situation? Why would it? I do believe that such a border poll and the run-up to, can be conducted in a civilized atmosphere, just as a Scottish referendum was. So, you know, what has happened overnight is massive, with very profound implications. The outwork **in the all** of this, in terms of how it can damage our economy and putting developing our economy front and center of program for government, has been a feature of what we have been at on the basis that people who have come through a conflict need to benefit from the fruits of peace. How do they do that? They do that by provision of jobs, provision of first-class public services, the protection of rights. So all of this matters are of critical importance. And even in the course of arriving here today, based on the conversation with somebody very close to infrastructural projects in the North. Already, already they are talking about how infrastructural projects that are key to the development of our economy, will be impacted by this decision as a result of the prospect that European funding will be withdrawn. **That is what it would aspect** of how damaging this could be. Let us face reality here folks. Those people who say that all of our problems will be resolved by a British government that will compensate the north for the loss of funds from Europe, I think they live in a cloud-cuckoo land. They certainly have not learned from the experiences that we have been through with this Tory administration. Last time **I had to** alongside the Liberal Democrats, well they effectively cut billions out of our **blocked gun**.”

2. Martin McGuinness: Hard borders with Europe would be ‘hugely damaging’ to Northern Ireland

Interviewer: Brian Maguire, Reporter EurActiv

Speaker: Martin McGuinness

Date: 18/10/2016

Link (video): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gKDuSk3Twb4>

Transcription

Interviewer

“Martin McGuinness is the Deputy First Minister of Northern Ireland and the leader of the Irish Republican Party Sinn Fein. Mister McGuinness was instrumental in bringing about the Good Friday Agreement. Northern Ireland voted massively to stay in the EU. Mister McGuinness says it should receive special treatment. He was in Brussels this week to rally support for Northern Ireland as the British government begins to negotiate the UK’s exit from the European Union. I spoke with him in the European Parliament.

How would you categorize the position for Northern Ireland in terms of Brexit ?”

Martin McGuinness

Deputy First Minister of Northern Ireland

“Well, we are very concerned that we are collateral damage in this battle between the British government and the European Union over Brexit. And of course, Brexit is hugely damaging to politics, social interaction and our economic prospects. Also, people need to remember that the European Union have invested greatly in the peace process and in supporting various programs that have complemented the peace process over many decades. That the Good Friday Agreement was about ending division between people in the North, between North and South, between East and West. Brexit undermines all of that and undermines the whole principle of consent because this obviously represents a massive constitutional change. And of course, the people of the North voted overwhelmingly to see their future in Europe. 56 percent.”

Interviewer

“If a hard border comes into place, wat does that mean for Northern Ireland?”

McGuinness

“Well I think it would be hugely damaging. It would be a massive setback because, as I say, the whole purpose of the Good Friday Agreement was to end division on the island. The establishment of a hard border, I think will be an encouragement to those small unrepresentative groups who are still committed to violence. They would see that as a boost for them and a real opportunity for them to continue with their work of trying to plunge us back to the past. I think it would be very, very damaging for the peace process. And I think the people here at the European Union that I spoke to yesterday are very conscious of that because the European Union are stakeholders in the peace process having made a massive contribution to it over many decades.”

Interviewer

“Do you think that if the peace funding was to end, there is a risk that Northern Ireland would go back to war?”

McGuinness

“I do not think peace funding on its own, I mean it is speculated that peace funding will come to an end at some stage in the future over the next four or five years. But I think there will always be an interest in peace in the North of Ireland and on the island of Ireland from the European Union. So, I think there will always be an interest in investing, in continuing in what is a huge success story, which has made a massive impact in other peace processes throughout the world. And we just, you know, hear what the President of Colombia has said about how the peace process in Ireland inspired him to make peace with the FARC guerillas. You have a conflict where hundreds of thousands of people have lost their lives over 50 years. So we should not underestimate the importance of the Irish peace process, but certainly it is in our interest to ensure that that peace process continues. And it is certainly in our interest that the armed groups, which are there at the moment and still dedicated to violence, do not succeed.”

Interviewer

“The British government, do you think it actually has the right to force Brexit? Given that there is the Good Friday Agreement, there is the devolved administration in Northern Ireland and Scotland also has its own Parliament. Do you think the British government has the right to go forward with Brexit on the basis of this referendum?”

Martin McGuinness

“No, I do not believe that they have the right to go forward with it at all. I think that the British government embarked on this course as a result of **and** fighting **within** the British Conservative Party. And we are the collateral damage to all of that because, quite clearly, they embarked on this course of action without given consideration to the political, social and economic impact on the island of Ireland.

Now, from our perspective, you know, we can criticize from now until the cows come home. What we need is a plan to deal with the situation in the time we are here. And I have to say, I was encouraged by the fact that Arlene Foster was prepared to sign up to a joint letter with me to the British Prime Minister outlining various areas of concern, not least the whole issue of that prospect of a hard border. And then that has been followed up by, I think, positive comments from Jeffrey Tomlinson, a member of the DUP in Dublin, where he clearly stated that it was their view that the island of Ireland needs to be treated as a special case. And he actually repeated that here when he came to the European Parliament afterwards. So, Ireland is a special case. And I think there is a huge responsibility on the government in the North, which is the DUP and ourselves as Sinn Fein, working closely with the Irish government to ensure that we can protect the interests of all of the people of the island.”

Interviewer

“You have been in the European Parliament yesterday and today. How have you been received? How do people understand the position of Northern Ireland?”

Martin McGuinness

“I have been received very, very warmly indeed. I think the European Union is very tuned on to the success of the Irish peace process, do not want to see that undermined and I think they also understand that a key element of the peace process moving forward is showing people who suffered from the effects of conflict. That the fruits of peace are as economic progress, it is jobs and it is the various supports that they have introduced like Common Agricultural Policy, **Interlake**, infrastructure funds and of course massive support for various educational institutions and the business community.”

Interviewer

“If Brexit actually happens in the end, and there are many things that can happen over the next two years or even longer than that, how can Northern Ireland remain within the European Union? And what was your sense of potential solutions that could be worked out when you have been speaking with politicians here?”

Martin McGuinness

“Well I think that is what has to be explored in the time ahead. And we will explore that between now and March of next year. We certainly see our future in Europe. The whole of the island of Ireland sees its future in Europe. We want to continue with that relationship. Obviously, Brexit impacts on that because that is a determination by this British government to drag us out of Europe against the democratically expressed wishes of the people. So the British government has to face up to that. The fact that people in the North did vote to remain, people in Scotland voted to remain and of course the Irish government has a key role to play. So we are asking the people here at the European Union not to abandon those people who see the future in Europe. So as of everything else, and we have been through this in the Irish peace process, what we need are imaginative solutions to these problems and I hope we can find one.”

Interviewer

“So, Sinn Féin obviously wants to see a united Ireland in the long term. That is not going to happen in the next two years but do you see this as a staging post where you can put in place a mechanism which could lead to united Ireland?”

Martin McGuinness

“Well we are a party that works towards our primary political objective which is the reunification of Ireland by purely peaceful and democratic means. Obviously, we are faced with an immediate challenge in relation to the whole issue of Brexit. But I think what that has done, it has posed challenges for people within the unionist community to consider, you know, here we are dealing with a British government that really does not care about the North of Ireland, give no consideration whatsoever to the effects of the referendum or a negative outcome to that referendum. And I think you already see it in Scotland for example, people who were previously pro-union, turn against Westminster and now supporting the whole argument for Scottish independence.

So me as an Irish republican, I think it is very natural that I hope the people within the unionist community will challenge themselves about the relationship with a government in London that really does not care about them.”

Interviewer

“Finally, the Conservative Party Conference was branded racist by even members of the Conservative Party itself. Is that something you would agree with?”

Martin McGuinness

“Well, I have been sharing all along that, you know, the whole Brexit referendum, which was a massive mistake on David Cameron’s part, was driven by racists within UKIP and by the extreme right-wing of the Tory Party. They are effectively in control. People can put whatever label they want on it. But certainly, I do think that given the predominance of the argument around immigration, you can clearly see that there is a massive prejudice against people recognizing that we should be living in a multicultural society. I mean, it is good in New York and you walk the streets of New York, people from every part of the world and it functions and it works. Why should we turn against our European neighbors? I actually think, the more people who come to our shores contribute positive to **everyday life**, pay their taxes, open the restaurants, that is an enrichment of all of our lives. And I think what is happening within the British Tory Party or that part of the British Tory Party that supported the referendum was also different from all that.

3. Gerry Adams talks Brexit to Irish parliament

Speaker: Gerry Adams (Michel Barnier, the EU's Chief Brexit Negotiator, visits the Parliament of Ireland)

Date: 11/05/2017

Link (video): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mOBnKT7epec&t=151s>

Transcription

“I welcome your presence and your remarks on behalf of Sinn Féin and let me tell you a wee bit about us. Sinn Féin is an Irish Republican party, or an all-Ireland party. We have the largest group of Irish MEPs in the European Parliament. Sinn Féin has TDs, MLAs, senators, MPs, MEPs and councillors with a significant mandate and are the only party substantially organized across this entire island.

Sinn Féin is opposed to the partition of Ireland. We are a united Ireland party. We want an end to British government involvement in Irish affairs. And we are working for the unity of all the people of this island based on equality, respect and reconciliation. We believe absolutely in the core values of equality, liberty and fraternity and the foundation of these values in the 1916 Proclamation. With others, Sinn Féin has played a central role in the development of the peace process and in the Good Friday Agreement and subsequent agreements. We helped to create and we were part of the national and international efforts which brought an end to conflict on this island not least with the European Union as a critical partner for peace over the past twenty years. For those who were previously denied the right to work peacefully for a united Ireland the Good Friday Agreement commits the governments to legislate for that **at** the people concerned to this.

Sinn Féin campaigned, like yourself, against Irish membership with the EEC in 1973. Since then, every European treaty has taken **further apart** from the Irish State. But Sinn Féin wants a different type of European Union. We want a social Europe which promotes peace, demilitarization, economic and social justice, international solidarity and greater democratic accountability. Today as European Union is wedded to neoliberal policies. These have created widespread hardship as austerity, deregulation and privatization, have undermined the social function of states and the rights of citizens including the rights of workers. And increasingly as you acknowledge in your remarks, people across the EU are uncomfortable with this. And this has assisted the growth of far-right parties which exploit people fears.

Brexit, in our opinion is a consequence of that. During the Brexit referendum, Sinn Féin campaigned for a remain vote in the north. It is clearly not in the interest of the people of this island, whatever their background, whatever their views, to have one part of the island outside the European Union and the other part inside. I know that you value the peace process and the Good Friday Agreement. I demand your support for that as you say gone back to the time of John Hume and David Trimble. I am sure you are aware that any agreement by the EU that violates an international obligation, which is what the Good Friday Agreement is, would contravene EU treaty obligations.

But Brexit is not just an issue for the north. It will at first affect our entire island if we let it. It is vital that its challenges are met on that all-island basis. It is clear and again you acknowledge this in your remarks, as did the Taoiseach, that Brexit will have a serious and detrimental effect and is already having this effect on Irish jobs and businesses and particularly the agriculture and agri-food sector. The aim of the European Union, if I may say so, should be to prevent a land frontier between the European Union and Britain on the island of Ireland. That should be the key objective and the priority to prevent that land frontier on our island. And

to achieve this, we have advocated that the north be afforded designated special status within the European Union.

We also believe that Ireland should have a veto on any agreement reached between the EU and the British Government that does not include this position. Designated status, mister Barnier, is the best and the only way to ensure that the entire island of Ireland remains within the European Union. I commend to you today. It is an **imaginative** solution that addresses the complexities of the problem. It does not affect the constitutional status of the north, that will only be changed by a referendum. Designated special status within the European Union is a position endorsed by this Dáil. It is a position of this parliament, it is endorsed by the majority of MLAs in the Northern Assembly. It also recognizes that the people of the north voted to remain part of the European Union. Is that just going to be set to one side, ignored, driven over? It is a solution being advocated by representatives of border communities. And some of them are here in the public gallery and I welcome them. The Tory Government in England should not be allowed to reject that vote. Should not be allowed to set aside the way the people in the north have decided. They should not be allowed to drag the north out of the European Union against the democratic voices of citizens.

Designated special status for the north within the European Union is not about a hard Brexit or a soft Brexit, it is about the best interests of our economy, our peace process and our people. It is also John Collier, a democratic **imperative**. It is about retaining the freedom of movement of goods, people and services on the Island of Ireland. Any restriction, any restriction whatsoever on the freedom of movement would represent a hardening of the border. Believe me this would severely damage social and economic cohesion. But beyond acceptable to people living in the border communities, but also the people right across our Island. Special status would ensure the North's trading relationship with the rest of Ireland and the European Union particularly in relation to business tourism, the all-Ireland energy market, agriculture and agri-foods. All of that would be maintained. It is about allowing all Ireland to remain in the Customs Union, the Single Market and under the jurisdiction of the European Court of Justice. It is about maintaining the European Convention on Human Rights as for protecting the rights of citizens in the north who have a right to Irish citizenship and therefore to citizenship of the European Union. Access to European rights and services across employment, workers conditions social security and health care must also be protected.

Now, mister Barnier, none of this is beyond our collective wisdom or our ability. It does require political flexibility from the European Union. Now of course the little Englishers may object but let me remind you and them that they are looking for special arrangements with the European Union for themselves. And there already are unique arrangements in place for other states. So, the European Union has been flexible on these matters. There are different forms of integration and relationships for member states and non-member states. These includes overseas countries and territories status, the European Free Trade Association and the Separate Customs Union. In light of the probations for Irish unity and the Good Friday Agreement, the European Union should not diverge from these norms. Sinn Féin, unlike the Taoiseach, would like to see a referendum on Irish unity within the next five years. However, the immediate challenge facing the European Union and the people of Ireland is hard to meet the threat of Brexit. And this is all about what kind of Ireland will emerge after Brexit. And the only way to positively ship that is through a special designated status for the North within the European Union.

So, merci beaucoup, monsieur Barnier, I thank you for your presence.”

4. Irish unity and Brexit major speech by Mary Lou McDonald TD

Speaker: Mary Lou McDonald (speech to business leaders)

Date: 22/09/2017

Link (video): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mnKjQEnleVA&t=17s>

Transcription

“Thanks very much for being here for what I think is a very important discussion on and I. I will try and give you some of my thoughts and, and views on the subject of Brexit. Irish unity, a prospect that is not only doable and realizable, but one that we firmly believe to be absolutely desirable and in fact necessary for the political, social and economic benefit of every soul and citizen that lives on this island. Whether they are orange. Whether they wear their bright orange plumage with pride as, as our brothers and sisters are entitled to are. Or whether they are in emerald shade of green, whether they fall somewhere in between on the vast multicolored spectrum that now is Irish society, North and South.

So, later this morning, as all of you know, Theresa May will give us the benefit of her wisdom at a speech in Florence. And according to media reports and speculation, she is due to announce a twenty billion euro divorce in exchange for a deal that would see Britain remain in the single market and customs union, all be it for a transitional phase.

Now, what the final settlement will look like at this stage, I suppose is anybody’s guess still. But if Theresa May does, as anticipated, seek a deal that is of this nature, it is I believe further evidence that Britain is beginning at last to wake up to the import of the EU to the British economy and the shocking flaws and jeopardy in her government’s drive for a hard Brexit.

The notion that Britain could simply could not run from the EU was always a pig in a poke. Britain’s referendum on exiting the European Union was born of a deeply cynical self-serving politics, driven by a split at the heart of the Tory Party. And I think their lack of cohesion and certainty and decision in terms of their post-Brexit positioning and strategy tells that story again.

It is clear that the future of Ireland, North or South, did not figure at all in David Cameron’s reckoning when he **plowed** ahead with the Brexit referendum. That may astonish some that are loyal to crown, to the crown and to the British system, but it is an inarguable reality.

I think Brexit represents the most serious social, economic and political threat to the island of Ireland for a generation, but it also presents us with opportunities. Both the Irish and British government are co-guarantors of the Good Friday Agreement. An agreement that secures the rights of citizens right across Ireland. Yes, Europe’s role in the Good Friday Agreement seems not to have crossed the Tory leadership’s mind. In the context of the current political crisis and the, the institutions being in abeyance, it would seem that the Good Friday Agreement seldom crosses their mind at all.

Now, whatever your political view, there is a collective an agreed position in Ireland that Good Friday is sacrosanct. And that is why the agreement itself must play a central role in the designated special status for the North within the European Union. We believe that that is the way forward. The agreement must be protected in all of its parts and we have proposed that the Good Friday Agreement be incorporated as a protocol to the withdrawal agreement between Britain and the European Union. And very importantly, this would not only protect the human

rights provisions of the agreement for citizens, it would ensure that the assembly legislation, the actions of the executive, are in line with EU law and regulations.

Now, I have been, as some of you may know and Sinn Féin, a critic of the European project in many of its aspects for a long time and I remain critical of it. That remains our position. But the fact is that the people here in the North of Ireland voted against Brexit, they voted to remain. And that decided view of the people must be respected. It is unconscionable and unthinkable that the North of Ireland would be coerced against the democratic will of the people out of the European Union and that we would have a small island at once inside and outside of the European Union.

The Irish government has a very clear responsibility to defend that vote, that democratic decision and to act in the best interests of the people of all of Ireland. The Taoiseach in particular has a responsibility to defend the Good Friday Agreement and to ensure that EU citizens, Irish citizens, British citizens living in the north continue to have their EU rights protected post-Brexit. Designated special status for the North to remain inside the European Union will ensure that Ireland is treated as a single entity and that is the better for all of us.

And by the way, that call for special designated status inside the European Union is gaining momentum at right across the continent. This status means no land border. It means no border, not how you manage a border, it means the absence of a border on our island. It means the North remaining with the rest of us inside the customs union, inside the single market, not as a transitional phenomenon but forever in perpetuity with ourselves. And in the event that the Tories are unable, are unwilling to secure that kind of agreement for Britain, nonetheless it is that type of agreement that must be struck and delivered for Ireland, North and South. So, a land border as it is discussed, does not just raise the prospects and the challenges, unacceptable challenges that might be presented by the reinstatement of custom checks or tariffs. As people in this room, I am sure, understand the cost of administering a border, whether it is visible or invisible, whatever the technology, ultimately passes on to citizens, to consumers and to business and that is simply not acceptable.

About 21 % of the North's exports, exports go to Britain. And it is up to Theresa May to spell out how free trade between the island of Ireland and the island of Britain can be maintained. That is the challenge for them. I await and we await to hear their views and proposals on that.

Truth is that, even in achieving the special status, economic success will still be significantly stifled and our islands potential, particularly the North's potential, will not be unleashed while the country remains partitioned. Border counties will continue to suffer from the volatility that comes with fluctuating currencies, the lack of inward investment and infrastructural deficits. That is why in my view, Brexit and the United Ireland debate are now fundamentally intertwined. Those who argue in opposing view have their heads in the sand, I think. I believe that the die had been cast and none of us have the luxury to shirk the challenging debates ahead. And when I say none of us, I do not just mean just those of us from a republic and our nationalist perspective. I mean unionist leaders also. I think Brexit has reenergized, reshaped, redefined in many ways the debate about a united Ireland.

In the South, as it is called, we in Sinn Féin have sought the support of all parties in the xxx for a committee on Irish unity. We will be bringing forward a white paper on Irish unity. I understand that other political parties are similarly working on such papers. And we want to see a referendum on unity, a border poll in the next five years. We believe that is achievable.

We also believe that it is winnable. And we believe, and we have said this to Leo Varadkar and to the Dublin government that we believe this should be government policy. For our part in that context, we want to progress the debate that delivers for all the people living on the island. Whether it is in terms of taxation, investment, in infrastructure or the delivery of public services, we want a new Ireland that delivers unity, prosperity and fair play. Those are the watchwords.

In 2015, and Kevin has referred to this, professor Huebner of Vancouver University produced a detailed modeling document that projected the total combined Irish economy would in a short number of years be greater than the two separate economies, North and South, by approximately thirty-five billion euro over a number of years. Doctor Huebner's study obviously requires revision and advancement and I really hope that academics and analysts will take up the challenge to actually look to the future and imagine a united integrated future and the real economic dividends that it can offer for all of us.

A recent intertrade Ireland and **ISRA** report demonstrated the extent to which the island is still, is already integrated economically and politically. All Ireland trade and goods was valued at 2.7 billion euro in 2016, South to North at about 1.65 billion, North to South at just over 1 billion. Almost 2,000 different categories of products are traded North to South in excess of 2,000 different categories of products are trade traded North to South. So as a result of the Good Friday Agreement and the progress that has been made, a large number of bodies and organizations already work successfully on an all-Ireland basis. Whether it is intertrades work with SMEs, whether you look to Tourism Ireland, the Northwest Cancer Center at Altnagelvin, **xxx** or the North-South Ministerial Council. And they work to the benefit, I think we can agree, of all of the island in a non-partisan and in an, in an inclusive way.

But there are still very significant challenges for business, for industry and for farming. Different tax legal and currency regimes operating across the island create unnecessary administrative cost and burden for business, hindering growth and the potential of the island. Imagine what we could achieve with the single all-Ireland jobs and investment agency, combining the current efforts of the IDA, of Invest NI and InterTradeIreland. Imagine that. How attractive would united Ireland package be for multinationals looking to establish new bases or grow existing investments in what is a bilingual, but also an English-speaking base with full and unfettered access to the single market. We need to look at that and we need to plan for that.

Professor Huebner noted in his report that attracting foreign direct investment is not only about implementation, implementing a competitive tax rate, but also and in many ways more importantly, it is about restructuring an entire policy framework to attract and to feed high value-added enterprises. FDI can play an important role in developing supply chain linkages for micro and small domestic enterprises, increasing knowledge transfer and productivity, those must be our goals. Harmonizing tax and legal structures for micro, small and medium-sized enterprises, which are, let us face it, the lifeblood of the Irish economy, North and South. Removing the unpredictability of currency fluctuations will enable business to expand the client base. The farming sector, and I know we are in a city, we are in a city location, but let us just remember that it in particular has been stymied with issues between two jurisdictions and tagging systems, animal health regulations and so on. But post Brexit and in an united Ireland, more importantly the agri-food sector can grow in a unified, a logical and a coherent way.

I want to very briefly say something at this juncture about the institutions. And I know I am sure in the room, a sense of perhaps impatience or questioning as to what might happen next and when the political system might go live again in terms of the Executive in the institutions. And I want to make very clear to this audience that we are absolutely resolved and determined to ensure that the Executive and all of the political institutions are reinstated at the earliest possible opportunity. These are shared democratic platforms which we value. There are platforms that serve all of our people. And if anyone is despondent in the audience, there is no need for our call for despondency, we are now at a decisive moment. A moment where political leaderships must lead from the front. And that means reestablishing the institutions on the bases of respect, inclusivity, credible, clean institutions that can deliver. That is what we want. That is what we are determined to achieve.

The Good Friday Agreement and the peace process itself provide our Ireland with the mechanism to achieve Irish unity. It is set out for us there. Our cross-border relationships are already in place and there is already implicitly an acknowledgement of not just a shared past, but indeed a shared future. Irish unity opens the big questions and beyond those that we will discuss here today. Families, like enterprise and educators, will have practical questions regarding the nuts and bolts of how unification will look. We know that unity is possible. We know in reality that we are already on the pathway towards it. We only have to look to the successful reunification of Germany to see that, with political will and of course with the support of the people, our ambition for Ireland can be realized. It is for the Irish government to accept that the best protection for the island of Ireland in any post Brexit arrangement is for the North to secure that designated status that I have described and for us to plow on and plan on free new United Ireland.

I want to mention and before I finish, a number of other matters that pertain to business and that needs to be secured. And despite the talk of the role of an Executive when it is reestablished in managing or deciding issues around Brexit, there is a reality that a loss of the heavy lifting will have to be done by Dublin and by the Irish government. Because they will be at the negotiating table and they have a responsibility for the, for the country as a whole. So, let me just flag up some of the things that we believe they need to, they need to argue for. They need to look for a relaxing of some of the EU state aid rules. They need to look to leveraging structural funds to buffer the impact of Brexit North and South. They need to ensure that the EU strategic infrastructure plans do not exclude the all island economy. We believe that they need to look to extend the scope of the globalization fund to support workers who will be affected by Brexit. We believe that we need a new Brexit solidarity fund for investment and diversifications programs in sectors and regions that will be impacted. And as I have said earlier, we have also called upon them to start planning now in real terms and in a very inclusive and open way setting out the plans for Irish unity.

EU leaders, we had Guy Verhofstadt in the Dáil, yesterday, Michel Barnier and all others, have committed to protecting Ireland's interests. They have guaranteed that the North can and will rejoin, if forced out, the EU as part of a united Ireland. I have been heartened by the extent to which and the level of understanding right across the European Union of the Irish question. And when you watch the European system very stubbornly insist that no further issues will be advanced until the money, issues around citizens and the Irish question are resolved. I think that is a reflection back at us. The depth of understanding that there is.

So the debate, not just on Brexit but on Irish unity, what a united Ireland will look like is happening as we speak in real time. and I want to thank again Gerry and Shaun and all of you for, for being here because this morning I think is an opportunity for us not just to, to deal with the, the dilemma and the, the challenges of Brexit, but to share and to help form each others in our collective vision for a united, a new inclusive and prosperous Ireland.”

5. "No practical solutions on the Irish border from the PM"

Speaker: Sinn Féin's Brexit spokesperson David Cullinane (interview Sky News)

Date: 3/12/2017

Link (video): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lmiVfJLghjk&index=21&list=PLoaFR16YHlpDPIc8KxTzd0UkONcpWRti>

Transcription

Interviewer

“Hello once again. Lack of progress on the Irish border issue could now be the main stumbling block preventing Brexit talks moving to trade. And the music from Dublin, well it has not brought much in the way of festive cheer to Westminster.

Sinn Féin's Brexit spokesman is David Cullinane and he joins me now from Dublin. Mister Cullinane many thanks for being with us and good morning to you.”

David Cullinane

“Hi there.”

Interviewer

“Just how dire is the situation at the moment? Is it the case that a solution can be found to the issue of the Irish border?”

David Cullinane

“Well, hopefully it can, but the solution has to be a tangible solution and a practical solution. and bear in mind that a majority in the north of Ireland voted to stay in the European Union. And they voted to stay for very practical and for very obvious reasons, that Brexit is incompatible with the Good Friday Agreement and the peace process. And obviously that is very serious and we do not want to see any hardening of the border. And all of that requires a special and unique solution for Ireland. And to date we have not had any tangible, tangible, practical solutions put on the table by Theresa May and her negotiators.”

Interviewer

“Do you tend then to agree with Hilary Benn, that actually to find a solution to the Northern Irish border, the Irish border, that does not involve continued membership of the single market, the membership of the customs union, there is not one?”

David Cullinane

“I do. And we are very clear in Sinn Féin and the vast majority of politicians in Ireland are very clear that the best solution for Ireland is for the entire island to stay in the European Union. It is crucial that the north remains in the customs union and single market. That is the only way to avoid a hardening of the border. And we also want to ensure that the Good Friday Agreement is protected in all its parts. And if we have a situation where the north is taken out of the customs union and the single market against its will, we will see a hardening of the border. And if we have a situation where the north is taken out of the purview of the European Court of Justice and the European Court of Human Rights, that has implications for the Good Friday Agreement.

So this is very, very serious. We are at a crunch time. We want to see firm solutions put on the table. But it is our responsibility in Ireland to get the best possible result for the people of Ireland. And the best possible result for the people of Ireland, and I would say the people of Britain as well, is that we protect the Good Friday Agreement. We protect the peace process and we insure we have no hardening of the boarder. And the only way to achieve that is for a special and unique solution for Ireland, which means the north staying in the customs union and single market and the Good Friday Agreement staying in the legal architecture of the European Union.”

Interviewer

“Are you in essence then arguing for the border to essentially be, you know, the Irish Sea? I mean if that is the case, why would Norther Ireland divide itself from the rest of the UK when the UK is its biggest trading partner?”

David Cullinane

“What we do not want is any hardening of the border and what we do not want is an EU frontier on the island of Ireland. The best outcome, I think, for Britain and for Ireland, is for Britain to stay in the customs union and the single market. That is a matter for the people of England, Scotland and Wales. But in terms of Ireland, we have to look for what is the best solution for Ireland. I would prefer if Britain stayed in the customs union and single market, but short of that, we have to make sure that we protect Irish interests and the best way to protect Irish interest is to ensure that we have no hardening of the boarder at all. That we have no EU frontier on the island of Ireland and that we protect the Good Friday Agreement and the peace process. So that is the very simple solution and I think that what we are doing is making this more complex. The obvious solution here is that the entire island of Ireland must remain in the European Union.”

Interviewer

“The suggestion from some and it follows on from what you have been saying, there is that the Sinn Féin is using Brexit as a means of, you know, **keeping** up support for, for reunification. Now if you believe that people in Northern Ireland would vote to leave the UK why has Gerry Adams not simply asked Theresa May for, for a poll right now?”

David Cullinan

“Well this is not about Sinn Féin. This is about the people of Ireland and a majority of people in the north voted for very sensible and very practical solutions to stay in the European Union. And what we are focused on in these negotiations is getting the best outcome and it is not just Sinn Féin, almost all of the parties in the north and in the south wants to ensure that we do not have any hardening of the border. Of course I want to see a united Ireland, but I also want to ensure that we do not have one part of Ireland inside the European Union and one part of Ireland outside the European Union. And we do not want to see a situation where the people of the north are taken out of the European Union, out of the customs union, out of the single market and that the Good Friday Agreement is taken out of the European Union against the will of the people. That is not right and we have a responsibility to stand up for the interest of the people of Ireland and that is what the Irish Taoiseach needs to do and that is what the European Union needs to do.”

Interviewer

“We are about to run out of time but I just want to ask you briefly, I mean, clearly the political crisis in Dublin last week revealed that the cracks and the confidence and supply arrangement. Do you anticipate a general election next year?”

David Cullinane

“It is possible and that is a different matter. We are focused obviously in the very short term on these crunch talks. That is where the concentration of the Irish government needs to be. I hope that we have an outcome. I hope that we see practical solutions put on the table and remind people again that it is in our interest in Britain and Ireland to protect the peace process and the Good Friday Agreement. And the only way to achieve that is for a special unique solution to be put in place.”

Interviewer

“Well, certainly there are plenty of people on both sides of the Irish Sea who would wish to see a solution to that border issue in the not too distant future. I mean just in simple terms of a likelihood, very, very quickly, how likely do you think it is that we are going to get a solution before the European Council meeting in December?”

David Cullinane

“I do not know. It is over to Theresa May and I heard from the hard brexiteers again this morning we want a solution, the Irish people want a solution, the Irish government wants a solution and it is over to the negotiators. And all we can do is to make it very clear that the best and only solution for Ireland is for the entire island of Ireland to remain in the European Union. This has to be the only offer on the table.”

Interviewer

“Mister Cullinane, I am afraid we have to leave it there. I am so sorry, but we are literally just about to run out of time. Many thanks for being with us.”

6. Mary Lou McDonald powerful speech on Brexit: The Challenges and Opportunities facing Ireland

Speaker: Mary Lou McDonald (speech at Queen's University in Belfast)

Date: 27/03/2018

Link (video): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KdrR-7-pvNY>

Transcription

“I want to thank you for the invitation here to address you this evening at this famous and prestigious university and seat of learning. I suppose I should be direct from the outset. I do not believe that there are any opportunities with Brexit. You might say that I should end just there, but I will continue. Brexit **runs country to** our peace agreements, to our economic interests and to the rights of all of our people. And while there are undoubtedly major issues and legitimate concerns with the direction of the European project, Brexit is not the answer.

Brexit reflects the inability of some to reconcile themselves with the present and the need to plan for the future. Those behind Brexit glory in nostalgia for the past. An imperial past that is gone and that is never coming back. Brexit, I believe, is fundamentally about the failure to recognize that our world has moved on, that our world has changed. And it is actually that that I wish to address tonight. Change, the process of change and the challenges of shaping change. I recently attended an event at the Library of Congress in Washington. And at that event, the former Chancellor of this University, senator George Mitchell, said something profound. He said that life is change. That is a very powerful and profound statement of truth. It is true in our personal lives and it is true in politics also. Nothing stands still, nothing can be taken for granted and everything that we do provokes a reaction. So, we have it in ourselves to be leaders of change.

A hundred years ago, women won the right to vote. In the 1918 elections Irish Republicans swept the boards in what became known as the Sinn Féin election. And the people voted for independence and freedom. The first woman was elected to Westminster: an Irish Republican abstention **xxx** Constance Markievicz. And at that time, the Sinn Féin MP's turned their back on Westminster and the first **xxx** was convened in Dublin in 1919. The Democratic mandate of 1918 was ignored and you know the rest that conflict ensued and partition was imposed on Ireland. And partition became that carnival of reaction that James Connolly had so rightly predicted. In the North, a gerrymandered Orange State with an inbuilt unionist majority, a cold house for Catholics. And in the South, a free state where Home Rule was Rome Rule, where theocratic laws and corrupt politics held sway.

But those days are over. Ireland has changed. Ireland is changing. The North is changing. And society and politics can no longer be viewed through the simple prism of orange and green. Because we now have **'An Dream Dearg'**. The red of the Irish language campaign. A campaign for equality spearheaded by a new generation of Irish speakers, proud of their culture and promoting the language for all. We have the rainbow of colour that makes up the marriage equality campaign. A new progressive generation is coming to the fore, challenging the old orthodoxies. And I believe that you will see evidence of this in the vibrant repeal the **xxx** campaign in the coming weeks. That is a campaign that is about trusting women.

So, modernity beckons and change is all around us. The perpetual unionist majority, the very foundation stone of this state is gone. And the democratic **xxx** cannot be missed. While there

are those who may want to stall progress to gerrymander boundaries to block rights, they cannot stop the process of change. Change can be agreed, it can be planned or it can be reckless and chaotic, but it cannot be stopped. And I believe that we have a responsibility to create a planned and agreed process of change. That is why we need the institutions at Stormont up and running. That is why we need the foundations of the Good Friday Agreement: equality, rights and respect, back in place. And that is why the process of reconciliation is so crucial. Because we all need to move forward together.

You all know that we are at a tough place at the moment and I know that dealing with a very changed society is difficult for many, including many within unionism. For over fourteen months we negotiated with the DUP. We reached an accommodation with their leadership. That draft agreement, whilst not meeting all of our proposals, did represent progress and provided the basis to reestablish power-sharing. The DUP leadership were unable to deliver that draft agreement and I say this not to recriminate, but to register my deep disappointment. The issues at stake: the rights of Irish speakers as agreed at St. Andrew, the legacy mechanisms agreed in Stormont House and the right to marriage equality available in the South and across Britain. All of those issues remain. And these rights can no longer be delayed because a right delayed is a right denied.

So, it is time to move on. To implement the agreements and to secure these rights. Let me say that any proposal for a shadow assembly is not a move forward. It represents a step away from power-sharing. A shadow assembly would make us all bystanders to direct rule, giving a veneer of accountability to direct rule. And Sinn Féin will not countenance direct rule.

So, in order to reestablish genuine power-sharing the two governments must convene the British Irish Intergovernmental Conference. That Intergovernmental Conference must produce a plan, a pathway to bring forward the legislation and resources to secure these rights and to implement the agreements. And the governments must secure these rights consistent with the agreements to loosen the political deadlock and to provide a way back to genuine power-sharing. This is a pragmatic and a common-sense approach. It is a challenge to the British government which is now dependent on the DUP and it is also a significant challenge to the DUP to embrace the spirit of power-sharing and full equality.

I believe the power-sharing institutions are the best. The only option to chart a way forward together and to navigate the big societal change that we face. As our society changes, so reconciliation and respect come to the fore. Because without these, the future is one of segregation and polarization and that is in nobody's interest. We need a society at peace with itself. A society that reflects our common humanity. A society that respects diversity and embraces difference. A reconciled and inclusive society.

I believe that reconciliation is about, is as much about shaping the future as it is about healing the past. It is a year since we lost Martin McGuinness and as Sinn Féin leader I want to build on his work. Reaching out the hand of friendship and understanding. I have no interest in fighting the battles of the past. I see absolutely no value in the blame game. Nobody should be asked to forget and nobody should be asked to forgive if they cannot. There is no one historical narrative or one simple truth. We must only agree that what happened in the past must never, ever happen again. And then we must be able to agree to disagree on some things and to move forward together to a society where you can comfortably be Irish or British or neither or both. Life has changed and Ireland is changing. Unionism needs to engage with that process of change to think the unthinkable. Many unionists will privately acknowledge change. That acknowledgment must now find public expression. So, let us plan a future for all of our children.

I am an Irish Republican, I am a united Irelander, a most unmanageable of revolutionaries, a believer in the unity of all of our people in all of our diversity. I believe that we can find common ground and build a new agreed Ireland of prosperity and opportunity, of equal rights in which everyone has a place. An Ireland that provides jobs, homes and health care for all our citizens. An Ireland where everyone has a place in society and a fair chance to succeed. An Ireland where it is about who you are and not about who you know. An Ireland where the politics of the past **xxx** wink politics of the past remains in the past. And unionist's citizens communities and their identity must be a central component in the building of this new united Ireland. Unionists must have the same sense of ownership as Irish nationalists and Republicans. So we are looking to build something entirely novel, entirely new and commonly shared.

Now some, as the song may say, some of you may say I'm a dreamer. To John Lennon fans that will mean something, to others it may not. You might say that the ideas I have set out are fantasy, that it is simply rhetoric. Well I say that these ambitions are grounded in hope and in confidence of our collective strength. This institution received its charter 173 years ago. This institution has born witness to the radical changes in Belfast and to our shared history. A century ago the first woman MP was elected. 30 years ago, conflict raged with no sign of ending and no notion that unionism and nationalism, that the DUP and Sinn Féin would share power. But here we are today. The conflict is over. The principles of power-sharing are established and now it is time to start the healing.

The question for all of us is: where do we want to be in 30 years' time? We have the opportunity and I believe the duty to put things right. So, we need to tackle sectarianism head-on. And I want to be clear, by the way, in saying this, I do not mean disrespecting people's beliefs, their cultures or their churches. Religious freedom, civil liberties and separating church and state are the essential dynamics of an open democratic system of governance. They are also the building blocks of our renew Ireland. Our laws, our constitution, constitutional and cultural frameworks, our public policies must be built on the fundamental equality of every single citizen.

So, the choices we make today, including around Brexit, will shape our future. George Mitchell said that life is change, so let us prepare for and shape that change. Let us imagine that new Ireland, a reconciled Ireland, a modern Ireland in which citizens have equal rights and respect. An Ireland where identities, British, Irish and others, are shared and celebrated. This is, I believe, the challenge of our generation. And it will call for patience and generosity, ingenuity and courage.

And so, my friends, may we possess these virtues in abundance for the journey that lies ahead."

Interview following the speech

"Well, it has certainly been a very wide-ranging discussion. We have discussed Brexit, we have discussed change and discussed the future. we have discussed the current politics, getting the assembly and the executive back up and running. We have discussed rights and social change right across the country. So it has been a really, really great discussion and I have enjoyed thoroughly being here at Queens. and I hope I am invited back sometime and certainly this type of dialogue, these types of discussion, I believe are the way that we carve out the future. It is a way that we build new ideas and new energy for the time ahead so it has been great. So, I want to say a very big thank you to everybody at Queen's University for hosting me this evening."

II. DUP

1. Seamless border key to 'sensible' Brexit for NI: Foster

Speaker: Arlene Foster (following negotiations with Mr Verhofstadt, EU Parliament's chief negotiator)

Date: 20/09/2017

Link (written text): <http://www.mydup.com/news/article/seamless-border-key-to-sensible-brexit-for-ni-foster>

DUP Leader Arlene Foster MLA has reiterated the Party's commitment to delivering a seamless land border with the Irish Republic as part of a 'sensible' Brexit for Northern Ireland.

Commenting after she and a DUP delegation met with the European Parliament's chief negotiator, Guy Verhofstadt, during his visit to Stormont, Mrs Foster said:

“The DUP is committed to a Brexit that delivers stability and new benefits for people living and working right across Northern Ireland. We have been clear in saying that this means finding a solution that keeps the border open and seamless for travel and trade.

In London, Dublin, Belfast and Brussels there has been an acceptance of Northern Ireland's unique position within talks that are ongoing. The visit by the European Parliament's negotiator, Guy Verhofstadt, is further reflection of this widespread desire to give our specific circumstances clear priority. I and my Party colleagues were therefore pleased to meet with him to restate the DUP position. We were encouraged that he acknowledged Brexit was happening and that solutions agreed in relation to Northern Ireland should respect that.

In recent weeks progress has made in talks aimed at retaining the Common Travel Area (CTA) post-Brexit. I stressed to Mr Verhofstadt that ensuring this happens is vital for those residing on both sides on the border and will ensure that the particular rights granted to Irish citizens in British law can continue to be exercised. Recent figures show an increase of 49% in overnight visits by Irish visitors to Northern Ireland. It is clear that the CTA works for both sides. I also pointed Mr Verhofstadt to the pledge by the UK Government that these future common travel arrangements will not impact on the Republic of Ireland's ability to meet its EU obligations in terms of free movement after Brexit.

On future customs ties the DUP position is clear. We want to secure an outcome that keeps the border open and seamless for businesses involved in cross-border trade. However this solution must be part of a UK-wide solution. We will not countenance any customs deal that cuts Northern Ireland adrift from our primary marketplace. That was the message we delivered to Mr Verhofstadt. Whether it be in terms of transition or future trade relations with those in the Single Market, Northern Ireland must be treated in the same fashion as the rest of the UK. This makes sense to our exporters. Great Britain accounts for 73% of trade flows in and out of Belfast Harbour. The latest NI manufacturing statistics show that sales to GB are worth six times more than those to the Republic of Ireland, and for local agri-food the percentage of sales within the UK stands at 75%.

It is clear that whilst the failed prospect of a special designated status for our Province may be attractive politically to some, it would come at a heavy price to many sectors of the local economy. We warned Mr Verhofstadt that those in Brussels with genuine concern for our citizens, for the future of the border and for political progress should not allow themselves to

be blinded from this reality by those factions who simply wish to use the Brexit process as a way of attacking our place in the United Kingdom.

There has been a great deal of speculation around Brexit and the impact on the Belfast Agreement. This is despite numerous interventions and reports indicating that power-sharing arrangements would be unaffected. However it is vital that the principle of consent and the widespread support for Northern Ireland's place in the Union as proven by June's election is respected in the outworking of any Brexit solutions identified.

The reality is that Brexit will not undermine the devolved settlement. The transfer of new powers to Stormont offers the opportunity to renew decision-making and could give autonomy in terms of the tools that can be levered to create jobs and growth. That is why it is wrong that Sinn Fein's position has left our Province without a substantive voice at the JMC or the fully functioning government that is required to embrace these new opportunities.

It is my hope that Mr Verhofstadt has listened to these concerns and that he returns to Brussels with a view of the Northern Ireland situation that is informed and realistic. We will continue to work with the EU institutions throughout the process. Through our MEP and 10 MPs the DUP will continue to actively work for a sensible Brexit outcome that delivers for all the people of Northern Ireland.''

2. Arlene Foster's London Brexit speech in full

Speaker: Arlene Foster (speech at an event by the Bruges Group in London)

Date: 22/05/2017

Link (written text): <https://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/northern-ireland/arlene-fosters-london-brexit-speech-in-full-35741784.html>

DUP Leader Arlene Foster MLA was the guest speaker at an event organised by the Bruges Group in London. In her remarks Mrs Foster said:

"We are certainly living through interesting political times.

Just twelve months ago few predicted the people of the UK would vote to leave the EU, the people of the United States would elect Donald Trump as President and Theresa May as Prime Minister would be heading for an historic General Election victory.

Though given the electoral upsets of the last twelve months we should take nothing for granted!

In Northern Ireland too things have changed. After almost ten years of devolution we have had no fully functioning Executive since January and a real prospect of Direct Rule being reintroduced before Parliament breaks for the summer.

Today I want to talk about two Unions, the European Union - which we have voted to leave - and the Union between Great Britain and Northern Ireland, which I hope and trust will continue to endure.

From politics in Northern Ireland I know only too well the temptation to refight old battles and to dwell on what has been.

But that is to make a fundamental mistake.

If politics is about anything, then it is about the future.

It is why we must make and remake the case for the United Kingdom and it is why we must get on with implementing the will of the British people last June.

I voted to for the UK to leave the EU not out of some sentimental form of British nationalism or because I do not value the contribution that people from all parts of the EU have made to life in the UK, but because I believe in the right of the UK to determine its own future, or to paraphrase the leave campaign, to take back control.

All of the signs are that Theresa May will win a resounding majority in the House of Commons when the votes are counted after the 8th June.

That means she will have a clear mandate to negotiate the arrangements for the UK's departure from the European Union by March 2019.

For Northern Ireland, that is far from the end of the story. While the fact that the UK is leaving the EU is clear, the precise terms of our departure remain to be negotiated and agreed.

While the general election is likely to give the Prime Minister a stronger hand to push for the kind of Brexit that she wishes to see delivered, in Northern Ireland it has run the risk of polarising an opinion that was coalescing around an agreed way forward.

At home, we may not have agreed on the 'leave or remain' issue but we were very close to agreeing on the kind of Brexit we wanted to see.

On this basis, I believe that there is room and reason for optimism. And I hope that once the election dust settles, we can once again pick up where we left off.

At EU level, I suspect there is more sympathy towards Northern Ireland than to any other part of the UK.

Both our government and the EU in their opening correspondence have reflected the importance of getting a good deal for Northern Ireland.

During the referendum campaign and since, some of those who advocated 'remain' have argued that the UK's departure from the EU will result in a hard border on the island of Ireland.

I know of no one who wishes that to be the case.

My experience of living beside an other EU member state is different from most other UK citizens.

I was born and raised in a border constituency.

I still live there and it's where I am raising my family.

That means, more than most, I am acutely aware of the importance of the ability of people and goods to move freely across the land frontier with the Republic of Ireland.

The fact that, geographically, Northern Ireland is the only part of the UK which will have a land border with the EU does make us different, as does our history and our politics.

Who could deny that the situation of Northern Ireland within the UK, and indeed Ireland within the EU, will face different challenges from other areas affected by the UK's EU exit and will require unique and tailored solutions?

However, I do not believe that a circular argument about some ill-defined and ill-conceived so-called special status for Northern Ireland is helpful: indeed, it is more likely to be counter productive.

In my speech to the DUP conference as far back as last October, I pointed out that any deal must recognise the reality of our geography and of our history.

As someone who argued for the UK to leave the EU, I am prepared to be flexible about the precise terms and timings.

I am more interested in getting the best deal for Northern Ireland and the UK as a whole than I am in some doctrine or dogma. By far the best way to achieve this is to get a Stormont Executive up and running as quickly as possible.

The talks process that we have been involved in since early March has been protracted and frustrating but in some areas progress has been made.

A common Northern Ireland position on Brexit is one such area.

Building on the letter agreed by the then deputy First Minister, Martin McGuinness and myself last August, all the parties have been making a positive contribution to an emerging consensus which can offer the best of all worlds for Northern Ireland.

Now is the time to work together and to grasp the opportunities which exist.

For those of us who argued for Brexit, that will mean looking for flexible and imaginative solutions to the challenges that face us; just as it will mean for those who argued for remain an acceptance of the decision.

It is a simple and indisputable fact that by far the most important Union for the people of Northern Ireland economically is the Union with Great Britain but that need not come at the cost of accepting the economic and cultural ties that cross the border.

For once, there need not be a winner and a loser. The Republic of Ireland needs a good outcome to these negotiations every bit as much as we do and I believe there is a shared objective between the UK and the Republic to get the right deal.

That right deal will not just be between Northern Ireland and the Republic. It will be between Ireland and the United Kingdom as a whole in terms of transport and trade, and people and goods.

I don't pretend there are easy answers but collectively, if we are all pushing in the one direction, I am confident that they can be resolved. It may take a bit more time and some financial support to get things right but it can be achieved.

Whether or not devolution is restored before the summer, I am committed to working with the incoming government to get the best deal for Northern Ireland.

I am also conscious that in doing so I want us to be able to win as much support as possible for whatever deal is done.

That doesn't just mean winning a majority in Parliament at the end of the process but ensuring that whatever deal is done does not tear at the fabric of the United Kingdom.

For me the importance of the EU, whether in it or how we leave it, ranks as a distant second to the importance of the United Kingdom.

That would have been the case whether we voted to remain or to stay.

I am confident the Prime Minister will have the interests of the whole of the UK in mind during the negotiations that lie ahead.

I know for some that the cause of the UK leaving the EU has been a central goal and ambition but I also want us to reflect on the precious bonds that exist between and across the United Kingdom, and why the Union is so important to us all.

As many of you will know, I come from the most westerly parliamentary constituency in the United Kingdom. I grew up and have lived virtually my whole life in Fermanagh.

It is home. It is where my heart lies and it is where I wanted to raise my family. That has not changed.

In some ways life in rural Fermanagh could not be more different than London but in so many other ways our lives are intertwined by every aspect of our history and culture.

I got involved in politics because I wanted to make a positive difference, because of my pride in Northern Ireland and my passion for the United Kingdom as a whole. My nationality is not simply a choice like the support of a football team but is integral to who I am as a person.

My Britishness is not just about the passport I hold but the identity that I have. It cannot be reduced to a name or a badge but is a culture and a way of life. It is about decency and respect.

It is about a shared history going back generations and hundreds of years, it is about a shared cultural experience which encompasses the newspapers that we read, the television we watch and the football teams we support.

It is about a pride in our role for good in the world, not just through two world wars and the fight against communism in the past but the battle for freedom and democracy today.

It was that devotion to country that led so many of our people down the years to serve in the armed forces and make the ultimate sacrifice for a greater good.

By today's standards the UK is not a large county in population terms but our influence extends to every part of the globe. We retain a leading role on the world stage, not just because our past record but because we can be relied up as a force for good when times are tough.

Fundamental to all that we are as a nation is our belief in freedom and democracy. For us these things do not need to be codified in a written constitution but are the beating heart of who we are as a society.

The United Kingdom today has a very different cultural make up in 2017 than it did in 1917 but we have retained the values that made our country great.

Whatever the debate today about immigration from the EU, there is no doubt that our country has been enhanced by the people who have over decades come to our shores.

The fact that, to this day, the UK remains a beacon attracting people from all over the globe to work, to settle and to make their lives, tells us more about our country than any other statistic really can.

Our democratic system has stood the test of time over centuries. In my view Westminster remains a model and an inspiration for democracy everywhere.

And who can doubt the role our Queen has played. I confess that I am an ardent royalist but even those who aren't cannot dispute the part Her Majesty has played in holding this country together.

My belief in and support for the United Kingdom does not rely upon the economic arguments, though there can be no doubt that it is overwhelmingly the case that we are all better together than apart. The United Kingdom has allowed the sharing of wealth and prosperity, not just between people but across our entire country.

It is because of all of these things and countless more that I want to see our country succeed and prosper. Of course we can evolve and change but we must retain those things that have made us what we are.

Political leaders from Northern Ireland understandably often remain neutral, at least publicly, about the outcome of a Westminster General Election.

After all we have to work with whomever the British people elect.

Over recent decades we have had both good and bad experiences of Labour and Conservative administrations.

But this election is different.

While Theresa May is well within the political mainstream and has proven herself to be a solid and reliable unionist, Jeremy Corbyn is beyond the proverbial and the political pale.

It is hard to take seriously the proclaimed unionism of a man who was so close to the political representatives of the IRA at the height of the Troubles. It is hard to see much good coming for the Labour Party from the coming election except the replacement of their party leader.

In just four years time we will be celebrating the 100th anniversary of Northern Ireland. Given the history and events of the last hundred years, that is an achievement of which we can be proud.

It has been possible, not just because of the resolve of the people of Northern Ireland in the face of threats and attacks from many quarters, but also because of the support we have received from the rest of the United Kingdom.

The Union will only survive if it is a two-way process. I am delighted that it has always been so. While from time to time British governments have often strayed from the path that we would ideally like to have seen pursued, we have always been able to count on the support of the British people.

That is why as the leader of unionism in Northern Ireland I want us to play as full a part as possible in the life of the United Kingdom as a whole. I want us to be able to contribute as much now and in the future in terms of the cultural and economic life of our country, just as we did a hundred years ago on the battlefields across Europe.

While so many of us take it for granted as a fact of life and integral to our existence, it does bear considering what is so valuable about our membership of the United Kingdom.

In Northern Ireland, Sinn Fein have been pushing for a border poll to be held to test opinion on the issue of the Union. I have no doubt that our position in the UK would be resoundingly endorsed and all recent polling makes that abundantly clear. However, as we have learned from the experience in Scotland, such campaigns by their very nature are divisive and disruptive.

In Northern Ireland, I want our Executive back up and running and dealing with the problems that face people in their everyday lives.

The case for the Union is strong. It is sound. And even those who would deny our cultural links have to accept that, quite simply, the case for the Union makes financial sense.

By making the case for the Union, I believe the facts would ultimately deliver a verdict which would render any future demand for a border poll devoid of credibility.

I see this 'case for the Union' being aimed at those in Great Britain as well as our fellow citizens in Northern Ireland. It is an opportunity to make the case for the Union in terms of our history, our culture, our economy and every other facet of life.

We should remind ourselves of the value of the Union and persuade others of its worth. I want us to put on the record the contribution that Northern Ireland has made and will continue to make to the life of our Nation.

This work should not be the property of any political party but should encompass contributions from right across life both in Northern Ireland and in the United Kingdom as a whole.

I have no doubt that the case for the Union can and will be able to command widespread support but we should also ask the question of what we can do to make it even more appealing to everyone within our society

This will require us to challenge ourselves as well as others. It may mean posing questions about what it is that we value about our membership of the United Kingdom and be careful not to deter support as a result of things that are not fundamental to that vision.

We are at the start of what I expect to be a long process. Our goal must be by the time the centenary of Northern Ireland comes around in 2021 to have a persuasive case that those of us who believe in the United Kingdom can confidently make anywhere and to any audience.

Despite the setback at the Assembly election in March, the Union between Great Britain and Northern Ireland is not under threat in the short term. But we must ensure that remains the case in the medium and long term.

If we take the wrong turn, we could see everything we hold so dear under threat in the years to come. But if we ask the right questions and take the right steps now, we can ensure that we pass on to the next generation the same rich inheritance that was passed to us.

Soon the election will be over and it will be time to get back to work. For the Prime Minister that will mean getting the best deal for the UK in Europe. For us in Northern Ireland it will mean getting devolution up and running again on a sustainable basis that works for everyone.

While those are very different goals and ambitions the one guiding star for all must be that we ensure the maintenance and the survival of the one Union that is so precious to us all - the United Kingdom.

3. Nigel Dodds - Northern Ireland must leave the EU on same terms as UK

Speaker: Nigel Dodds (statement)

Date: 5/12/2017

Link (video): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f2zML-bNNU4>

Transcription

“Following the events of yesterday, there has been a lot of speculation why no agreement was secured in Brussels and for our part, as we made clear in the **House** just a few short minutes ago, the Democratic Unionist Party has repeatedly and consistently made clear that Northern Ireland must leave the European Union on the same terms as the rest of the United Kingdom. And we welcome the very strong support of many colleagues across Parliament for this position. As evidenced today in the House, where there was very, very strong support from Labour conservatives about the integrity of the United Kingdom and the need to maintain the United Kingdom going forward after Brexit. So, we will not accept any principles or language and fears **one** which lays the foundation for separating Northern Ireland politically or economically from the rest of the United Kingdom.

Well, the Prime Minister and our government have made clear that the economic and constitutional integrity of the UK will not be compromised in any way and David Davis repeated that today in his statement. And they would not support any proposals that reached that central tenant. And for us and indeed many in Parliament, the integrity of the United Kingdom comes first.

So, despite several briefings over the course of the last few weeks, we only received written text **lit** yesterday morning. We understand this was due in part to delays caused by the Irish government and the EU negotiating team. Upon immediate receipt of that text, we indicated to senior government representatives that it was clearly unacceptable in its current form. By Her Majesty’s Government understands the DUP position and we trust in the aftermath of yesterday’s, others now I understand it very clearly as well.

The Prime Minister has said that there will be no border in the Irish sea. She has made it clear that the UK is leaving the European Union as a whole and that the territorial and economic integrity of the United Kingdom will be protected.

So, we want to see a sensible Brexit and we will continue to work through the detail of all these issues with the government today and in the coming days. These are issues of such vital importance to our nation as a whole that we must work for as long as it is necessary to ensure that they are got right.

So, the DUP does stand strong for the Union and we also issue a warning today to the Dublin government that by continuing its aggressive stance, they are in danger of delivering for themselves the very outcomes that they say they want to avoid.

So, now more than ever it is clear that we took the correct view in encouraging people throughout the United Kingdom to vote to leave the European Union.

So we will take a few questions.”

(question inaudible)

“Well, we are not in business of **ensuring** any instructions to anybody. We do not want to see the talks fail, we do not want to see an outcome where there is no deal. We want to see a sensible Brexit and we will work through on the basis of the clear red lines that we have set down which are, as we understand, that the red lines of the government as well. So, a sensible Brexit in which the UK leaves as one nation with a sensible relationship with the rest of the EU. With a soft border in the island of Ireland which can be done on the basis that was set out in the government’s paper back in August. But we have to move forward in a progressive way and we will work constructively to achieve that end.”

(question inaudible)

“Well, it is not a question of us budging. This is a negotiation between the United Kingdom government and the European Commission. The European Commission unfortunately, I think and maybe to the regret of some of the other member states, ceded a veto to the Irish Republic and that is a matter that they will maybe want to reconsider. We, for our part, are very confident that were we stand and we are very confident that the British government understands that when you translate red lines into text, the text has got to reflect what is the red lines.”

*(Question: “If the government were to persist with **xxx** to the EU, **what you saw as** bringing in the risk of or introducing a border between Northern Ireland and the rest of the UK, would you be prepared to tear up your pact, which keeps the Conservative party in **power?**”)*

“I do not think the government will consider that. I do not think they will go down the road to try to impose something that would, in our view, disrupt politically or economically Northern Ireland from the rest of the United Kingdom. So, I do not think that scenario will arise.”

(question inaudible)

“Well we continue to work with the government. We have very good discussions with them. As I say, text is important, words are important, they really do matter. So, when we finally see text, that is when we make the final decision. And clearly the text that we were shown very late yesterday morning did not translate what we have been told in general conversations into reality because there was far too much ambiguity and did not actually **nail** down the issues that needed to be **nailed** down.”

(question inaudible)

“Well, Northern Ireland already has a single energy market with the Irish Republic. So, there are areas where we can cooperate with the Irish Republic and indeed where it may make sense to have some kind of regulatory alignment in certain specific areas, but not in relation to the following the rules of the single market or the customs union for Northern Ireland as a generality. The fact of the matter is that this whole issue of new divergence and regulated alignment in our view has been brought in by the Irish Republic. The fact is that there are sensible and are sensible ways of dealing with the Irish border which do not involve that through technology and trusted trader status and exemptions. The EU has said no to that. It is the EU that is causing the problems in terms of a hard border in Ireland. Not the DUP, not the British government. There are sensible ways around that and those should continue to be explored.”

(Question: “Would you be astonished if there were to be a deal by the end of the week?”)

“Would I be astonished? I have learned not to be astonished by anything in politics anymore.”

(Question: “What do you say to those people who say that now the DUP has a veto on the UK’s policies when it comes to the European Union and that xxx?”)

“No, the DUP does not have any veto. The Irish Republic does have a veto. They are uncomfortable with that veto because they keep trying to say no it is not our veto it is the EU but it is very clear that the EU have given a veto to the Irish Republic. And the Irish Republic are flexing their muscles and using their current position to try to gain wins for them. I do not argue with their desire to advance their interest, but they are doing so on a reckless and dangerous way which is putting at risk years of good Anglo–Irish relations and good Cooperation within Northern Ireland. And there is a noticeable change in tone and aggression from the Irish Republic since Leo Varadkar and Simon Coveney took power, compared to the previous administration. So, they are the ones that are in danger of bringing about problems as a result of a veto, not us.”

(Question: “You said that there was some ambiguity in the text that you received yesterday morning. Did anything that David Davis just said in the House of Common clear that up? Did the government change its position at all in what he said?”)

Well, the government has always been clear about their red lines and we talk to them and we have been very clear to them and them clear to us. But as I may have said previously, what matters is the text, what matters are the words that are used in text and in international treaties and agreements. And it is vitally important that text translates accurately what are the general principles of political agreement. And when we negotiated the bel, the St. Andrews agreement and other agreements, that has always been the key test. We have sought to engage the government on that text, the government showed us that text, late yesterday morning.”

(Question: “You say you want to hold the United Kingdom together. Are you not worried that you are actually jeopardizing the future of the United Kingdom by delaying Brexit?”)

“No, I think what you heard in the House of Commons today, what you have heard from Ruth Davidson, what you have heard from right across the House of Commons and indeed the strong support we have been getting as we have been here since Monday among backbenchers of every hue, is that one thing that will not be allowed to happen, is that the United Kingdom is broken up. And it is really gratifying to hear today that Keir Starmer reiterate that very strongly. Neighbor backbenchers making that very clear and I think Ruth Davidson’s intervention and her comments have been very, very welcomed by people in Northern Ireland and Arlene Foster and Ruth spoke earlier today as well.”

Okay, thank you very much, thank you.

4. Foster – “Brexit is not about cutting ourselves off from our nearest neighbours”

Speaker: Arlene Foster (written statement)

Date: 13/01/2018

Link (written text): <http://www.mydup.com/news/article/foster-brexit-is-not-about-cutting-ourselves-off-from-our-nearest-neighbour>

Whilst the referendum was a vote by the British people, the ripples that flow from the referendum result will be far reaching with long-term implications for people well beyond the shores of the United Kingdom. And I appreciate and understand that nowhere will be more impacted by the United Kingdom’s exit from the European Union than Ireland.

I grew up only a few miles from the Fermanagh/Monaghan border. I saw for myself growing up how, even during our darkest days, we shared close economic, cultural and social ties across the border. My own grandmother used to travel back and forward across the border on a bicycle to sell Irish lace in Clones. Those ties have strengthened since the Troubles ended to the extent that in recent times we have enjoyed an extraordinarily, unimaginably positive relations between our two states.

I don’t want to lose any of that. The progress we have made together was hard won. I lose none of my unionism by saying that I am proud of that progress. We should all be proud of initiatives like the Cancer Centre at Altnaglevin Hospital in Londonderry where patients from both sides of the border are receiving the treatment they need. And whilst the UK’s exit from the EU has the potential to test the progress we’ve made, it doesn’t automatically mean that everything we have achieved is or will be undone.

I often think that Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland are like a semi-detached house. The houses may look the same on the outside, but, inside, they look different and we do many things very differently. But no matter how contrasting the interiors are, they are tied together and part of the same neighbourhood and what happens on one side of the fence inevitably has an impact on the other. I know that we are rivals in some respects, but in so many ways success for one of us is success for the other. As we chart a new course for the future, it is not in our interests to see the Republic of Ireland do anything other than prosper. Nor does it help any of us if we let the challenges that Brexit brings deflect us from the opportunities that will exist in the future. We will continue to have our own identities and for our part we will no longer be members of the European Union, but our futures will still be closely connected.

The Democratic Unionist Party supported the UK leaving the European Union but in so doing Brexit is not about pulling up the drawbridge, building a wall and cutting ourselves off from our nearest neighbours.

But we must all recognise that change is coming as a result of the referendum. It is our job as politicians to help shape that change but to do so in a way that ensures that those economic, cultural and social ties that have endured through difficult times and have thrived through better ones continue into the future.

Ladies and gentlemen, the question posed by this session – “How will our future politics be shaped by Brexit?” – correctly assumes two things.

Firstly, it acknowledges that Brexit is happening. Almost since the 23 June 2016, some have laboured under the misapprehension that the will of the people of the United Kingdom to leave the European Union could be, somehow, scuppered or stopped. They’ve believed that the

referendum result can be undone even as time ticks by and we move from the referendum to the triggering of Article 50 to the conclusion of phase 1 of the negotiations and on into phase 2. When, this past week, even Jean-Claude Juncker recognises the reality by remarking “Don’t believe those who say that its not going to happen”, you know that it is all but a handful of diehards who don’t believe that Brexit is going to happen.

The second assumption contained within the question is that our politics will change and that Brexit will be the catalyst for that change.

Politics will undoubtedly be changed by Brexit. It is being changed by Brexit. Change was exactly what the referendum result was all about.

A majority of the people of the United Kingdom in the biggest nationwide vote since 1992, voted for change. The type of change they voted for differed from person to person.

Some wanted more control over our own money.

Many wanted more control over our borders.

Others wanted more control over making our laws.

Whatever their individual reasons, people wanted change.

And what happened in the United Kingdom wasn’t out of the ordinary. Electorates across the western world have been turning their face against the status quo. In the United States, in Germany and in France people have voted for something different. Different types of change, but change nonetheless.

The change occurring across Western democracies isn’t a product of Brexit. Brexit is more of a symptom than a cause.

And let’s face it, the British people have always had a far from enthusiastic relationship with Europe and its institutions. The opportunity to have their say on the EU after years and years of feeling that successive governments of varying hues were denying them that chance. And a majority of the British people seized that chance.

Brexit has changed British politics because people wanted change. At a national level, I have observed as parties have struggled to understand what the underlying message of the referendum result was all about. And, equally, I’ve watched as politicians across the island of Ireland have grappled with what the impact will be for this part of the world.

It is fair to say that the bulk of the views expressed about how Brexit will shape the future of politics on this island has been underpinned by a sense of concern. I may well not share those concerns, but it doesn’t mean that I don’t understand or appreciate them.

I also understand and appreciate that there is a view that my Party is blasé about those concerns. That we are motivated by an ideological desire to decouple the United Kingdom from the European Union without any concern for the consequences. That simply isn’t true. We believe that there are new longer-term opportunities as well as short-term challenges from the UK’s departure from the European Union.

From the UK's entry to the old European Community to the failure of member states to agree to reform the European Union, the Democratic Unionist Party has been consistently sceptical about Brussels. When the then Prime Minister's renegotiations failed to produce anything of substance, we believed that a vote to leave was the only viable option.

But what we absolutely did not adopt was some sort of 'devil may care' attitude as some would suggest.

In October 2106 at our Annual Conference, I set out 5 common sense, reality based principles that would guide the DUP's approach to the Brexit negotiations.

They were, firstly, that the whole of the United Kingdom leaves the EU.

Secondly, the economic and social benefits for Northern Ireland within the United Kingdom are far more important than our relationship with the EU.

Thirdly, any deal must recognise the reality of our geography and of our history.

Fourthly, we will work with whoever we need to at home and abroad to get the best deal for Northern Ireland.

And fifthly, whatever the outcome of the Brexit negotiations, it will not divert us from delivering on our plan to build a better Northern Ireland.

Those 5 Principles illustrate how, from the outset, the DUP believed that the will of the people should be respected but that it should be respected in a way that was cognisant of the unique set of circumstances that we in Northern Ireland and the Irish Republic have and that we as a Party were prepared to work closely with our nearest neighbours to achieve an outcome that worked for people on both sides of the Irish border.

I have consistently said that the Democratic Unionist Party's desire is to see a sensible Brexit. Some critics and commentators have asked if a sensible Brexit means we want a 'hard Brexit' or if we prefer a 'soft Brexit'. When we say we want a sensible Brexit, as is always the case, we mean what we say. We want to see the referendum result respected with the UK – as one – leaving the European Union but doing so in a way that achieves the best possible outcome for Northern Ireland, for the United Kingdom as a whole and for the European Union.

We want to maximise the opportunities that will flow from our exit from the European Union. More powers in the hands of devolved administrations. More flexibility for locally elected Ministers to set policies that work for our regions. And the ability to pursue ambitious new free trade agreements around the world.

But we also want to be able to continue to trade as freely with the EU as possible.

We want to avoid a cliff edge for businesses by having a strictly time limited implementation period.

We value the contribution that EU migrants have made and continue to make to our economy and society and we will support a new border policy that is strong but sensible.

We may well be leaving the European Union but we are not leaving Europe and we want businesses, students and researchers to continue to have opportunities to foster links with their neighbours through continued participation in future EU programmes that are cost-effective and bring tangible benefits.

And in Ireland, we want to retain the Common Travel Area and for our border to remain open, recognising the daily reality that tens of thousands of people cross it freely north and south to go to work, to go to school and to go to college.

And we absolutely don't want to see the creation of a hard border on the island of Ireland.

We value the trade that has developed at pace between Northern Ireland – and the entire UK – and the Republic in recent years.

The UK market is critical to many Irish sectors and especially agri-foods with 40% of Irish food and drink going to the UK.

The Irish market accounts for just over 30% of all of Northern Ireland's exports and trade from Northern Ireland to the Republic rose by more than 16% in the last year. It is, in short, an incredibly valuable market for Northern Ireland businesses.

But so too is Great Britain. More so, in fact. Of the £26 billion worth of sales by Northern Ireland firms that are outside of the region, 56% go to Great Britain. Northern Ireland trade with Great Britain is worth 3.7 times more than Northern Ireland exports to the Republic. It is, by far, our biggest external market.

It was for that reason that my Party objected to the originally proposed text of the Joint Report on progress during phase 1 of the Brexit negotiations. We could not countenance anything which created a border down the Irish Sea and potentially cut Northern Ireland businesses off from their biggest market. We welcome the final text of the Joint Report as a significant improvement on the first draft. It means that – in the event of no agreement in phase 2 – Northern Ireland businesses will retain unfettered access to the whole of the UK internal market and that, if required, any regulatory alignment on issues of North/South co-operation will be for the entirety of the United Kingdom.

It is my hope that we do not have to rely on any fall-back position and that we can agree a comprehensive trade agreement between the UK and the EU. Such a deal is evidently in the best interests of both the United Kingdom and Ireland given our close trading relationship.

Maintaining Northern Ireland's economic and political status as an integral part of the United Kingdom is absolutely crucial to me and my Party. To think anything else would be as foolish as believing that the Taoiseach or the Tánaiste desired anything other than Irish unity. But while we will always battle for our own national interests, we must also battle for our mutual interests.

I am under no illusions. Achieving an outcome that satisfies the core objective for Northern Ireland businesses to continue to enjoy barrier free access to the Great Britain market whilst also maintaining a frictionless border on the island of Ireland will require some novel solutions. Equally, we must learn lessons from how phase 1 was handled. Whilst, ultimately,

there was a satisfactory outcome that permitted progress to phase 2, the United Kingdom and the Irish Government will need to be very mindful of the potential impact for all of us on the island of Ireland, and all those involved in the negotiations should approach this stage with the seriousness it requires and learning the lessons from phase one. The atmosphere going forward needs to improve and in particular negotiators need to be careful not to rush for the microphones at the first opportunity.

Our interests may not always be the same but there are surely more things that will unite us in this second phase than divide us. For our part we are under no illusion how difficult and complex the discussions over the coming months will be.

And our mutual interests will not end on the day the UK formally leaves the European Union. The United Kingdom may be leaving the EU but the common interests that we share across the British Isles will remain.

The Belfast Agreement couldn't possibly have foreseen an eventuality like the United Kingdom exiting the European Union. But within the structures created by the 1998 Deal there is, I believe, an institution that could serve us all well in the post-Brexit world.

The East-West Axis has perhaps always been the poorer relation of the Three Strands of the Agreement and, arguably, the British Irish Council has failed to live up to its potential. The North South Ministerial Council, by contrast, has functioned well and has already shown the capacity to adapt to the circumstances created by Brexit by agreeing a set of joint principles back in July 2016 when our institutions were still up and running. I well remember how during those long negotiations that led to the Agreement in 1998 how having an East-West entity in place was viewed as crucial as a counter balance to the North South institutions. There was perhaps less attention paid to how it would, in reality, develop into the Nordic Council like body that it was compared to at the time.

I believe that the British Irish Council has been played a valuable role over the past 20 years and I can recall in different Ministerial capacities useful engagements with counterparts from across these islands, but Brexit creates an opportunity to reimagine the British Irish Council and transform it into something closer to what was originally envisaged.

Whether it be in agriculture, transport, energy, telecommunications, the environment or security, there will still be much for us to learn from each other and, crucially, much for us to continue to co-operate together on.

Let us look at the Nordic Council example. Since 1952, the 5 Nordic nations and the three autonomous territories of the Faroes, Greenland and the Aland Islands have through the Council and the Council of Ministers co-operated between their legislatures and governments on a wide range of policy areas. They do this even though some of the Nordic nations are members of the European Union and some are not, while some are in the Eurozone and some are not.

Is that not the sort of example we should emulate across the British Isles? The UK exiting the European Union ought not to become a barrier to continued co-operation on issues of ongoing mutual interest. It especially shouldn't become a barrier when the infrastructure – in the guise of the British Irish Council – already exists that can allow us to continue to work together as closely as ever on issues of shared interest.

It is my intention to raise this issue with the new Secretary of State for Northern Ireland and the Tánaiste in any upcoming talks and discuss what adaptations might be needed to future proof the British Irish Council so that it might aid us in maintaining and enhancing that close co-operation across the British Isles that we've come to cherish.

Ladies and gentlemen, change was the question posed by this session. And yes, Brexit will bring change. Quite how all of that change will manifest itself remains to be seen.. But the change does not have to be total any more than it has to be negative.

Change should not be allowed to weaken the relationships so painstakingly put together across these British Isles. As challenging as finding a suitable solution might seem, there is no good reason why our own issues on this island should present any threat to the progress we've made. I value the relationships we have developed too much to do anything that would jeopardise them.

But, whether we voted to leave or voted to remain, whether we are citizens of the United Kingdom or citizens of Ireland, we must accept the reality of the referendum result, refrain from the continued refighting of the referendum, and seek the sensible, mutually beneficial outcomes from the complex negotiation process ahead that will serve us all well.

5. DUP's Sammy Wilson on a hard border in Northern Ireland

Speaker: Sammy Wilson (interview sky News)

Date: 27/02/2018

Link (video): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pcsl56WK7PE&list=PLoaFR16YHlpDPIJe8KxTzd0UkONcpWRti&index=15>

Transcription

Interviewer

“Well, more reaction immediately to that leaked memo now. I am joined by the MP Sammy Wilson who is the DUP Brexit spokesperson. Very good evening to you, Mr Wilson. First of all, your reaction to this from Boris Johnson. You could, I mean, say yes, it is **proven planning** for all contingencies, but there is a suggestion there that the border could harden.”

Sammy Wilson

“Well, I think, first of all, there is a border between Northern Ireland and the Irish Republic indeed. That is what all the furore is about. And the EU and the Irish government have been seeking to try and eliminate that border by making Northern Ireland joint more to the Irish Republic **xxx** the United Kingdom. Secondly off course, even at present, there are checks which go on goods which cross the Irish border, whether they are veterinary checks, whether they are spot checks by revenue patrols etc. And of course, when it comes to transporting goods, firms have to put it in.”

Interviewer

“But the Foreign Secretary seems to be suggesting here that there could be some change, some increased form of checks. Whether it be through electronic surveillance or something like that. And it is the DUP policy, is it not, to have as friction, a frictionless border as possible?”

Sammy Wilson

“Well yes, but a frictionless border, and do not forget, even way back in August last of year when the government produced its paper about the Irish border, **had** accept that there would be surveillance of lorries and cars which go across the border. It happens at present by the way. If I drive in the Irish Republic and do not pay on the toll road, there are cameras on the **xxx** which will take my number and can trace me and then bill me. So.”

Interviewer

Where are you going with the Boris Johnson's analysis which he expressed on the radio today about the congestion charge in London? That is all you need, kind of automatic number plate recognition.”

Sammy Wilson

Well, those are the kind of things that has been said, yes, not just by our own government but a report which was produced for the European Parliament by the former director of the World Trade Organization. Lars **Karlsson** indicated that you could have, what he calls a virtual border. It would mean that there would be checks, that there would be physical ways of checking goods,

but it did not mean that you had to stop vehicles as they crossed the border in order to check the contents of the lorries.”

Interviewer

“But crystalize the position for me, Sammy Wilson. Before we discuss what the EU might come up with tomorrow in this draft document. If it is a stark choice between staying in a customs union, staying in THE customs union with the Republic of Ireland or leaving it all together with the rest of the UK and a resulted hard border, which is it?”

Sammy Wilson

“That is not even a choice because, off course we are part of the United Kingdom. Our main market is not the Irish Republic, it is TB.”

Interviewer

“So, it is hard border?”

Sammy Wilson

“So, if, in economic terms, it makes sense for us to stay with the United Kingdom, rather than to stay with the Irish Republic. And in political terms, off course, as a unionist, I wish to remain part of the United Kingdom. And therefore, the choice is very easy for me. If there have to be some checks, then let there be checks. And it was never a.”

Interviewer

“But, it is just that, with the policy of a frictionless border, if that is the choice, then it has got to be a hard border. Forget that policy, you have got to stay align to the rest of the UK.”

Sammy Wilson

“Well, I think this term, a hard border, needs to be defined. Those who speak about a hard border think about checkpoints on every road going in and out of Northern Ireland, surveillance on those roads, every vehicle stopped, searched, etc. That is not what is. I think of what. And I have not spoken to Boris Johnson about it. But the more I see what was in the letter, what he was saying is: yes, off course there will be ways of checking trade across the border. It does not mean that you have to stop vehicles. It does not mean that you have to have physical barriers across roads. There are means of doing that. Some people have described it more as a virtual border rather than a physical border.”

Interviewer

“Ok. So, this EU document tomorrow which is going to form a legal text. What are you expecting? We are hearing it is going to be continuing regulatory alignment between Northern Ireland and the South.

Sammy Wilson

“Well, what I would expect if the EU abide by the agreement which they made with the UK government in December, would be that there would be a wide range of options looked at in that legal document. Including a trade arrangement between the UK and the EU. If that was not possible, particular measures which might be adopted between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland border. Or, as a last step, regulate realignment, which would be regulated realignment of the whole United Kingdom with the Irish Republic AND. And, of course, and this is the other important point. Cause this is the EU and the Irish xxx up to December. Also a commitment that there would be no separation of Northern Ireland from the rest of the United Kingdom. Now, everybody signed up, up to that in December. That is what I would expect, if the EU are playing fair. If, off course, they are going to xxx on the agreement which they made in December. And the leaks that we hear, where they are only opting for one I.E, that keeps Britain in the European single market and the customs union, they are xxx. And you have to ask, can you negotiate with people like that?”

Interviewer

“Ok, but we will wait to see what the EU actually says. Mr Wilson, it was very good to see you. Thank you very much. Sammy Wilson.”

III. SDLP

1. Colum Eastwood SDLP: Northern Ireland Assembly on EU Referendum vote

Speaker: Colum Eastwood (EU referendum debate in Northern Ireland Assembly)

Date: 27/06/2016

Link (video): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ixuJsz9cWDc>

Transcription

Colum Eastwood

“Thank you, Mister Speaker. I hope that some of the comments that we have heard from xxx positions is not going to be how this debate develops. And I do not just mean in here, because I think what everybody in here who calls himself a democrat should recognize, is that people here, in the north of Ireland, voted for our position within the European Union to remain the same. People in Scotland did that as well, young people everywhere formed a coalition to have a positive relationship with the European Union. And people here in particular in Northern Ireland understand the benefits that this place has given us. The number of people I spoke to on Friday in my own constituency that is surrounded in three sides by a border. The number of people that I spoke to in that constituency who were devastated, who were scared, who were extremely worried about what comes next. And when you see, when you see posters all around, I had to drive past a whole load of them, coming here in the morning. When you see posters all around Northern Ireland telling you it is going to be 350 million pounds more for the health service and all that sort of stuff and of course the leave side are now rowing back on those great big commitments about the health service, about immigration, about all those plans that they made to xxx, go ahead.”

MLA (name unknown)

“I thank the member for given away. Is the remain side rowing back in the third world war?”

Colum Eastwood

“Well, first of all, I do not know what you are talking about, but I, I made a commitment, I made a commitment to speak positively about the European Union throughout that campaign and I think we did. Because we know the benefits of it. But now, the leave, the leave campaign is rowing back on all their big claims. And we told them the whole way throughout that campaign that that was going to happen. Because the notion, the notion that you are going to be able to have access to the single market whilst at the same time controlling immigration is utter nonsense. It is nonsense and it is proven to be nonsense in places like Norway and Switzerland.

So, there was a whole lot of lies told, Mister Speaker. But people here, people in Northern Ireland still saw through it and we are standing as democrats by the people here who decided that we are not being dragged out of the European Union by the right wing of the Tory Party or anybody else who does not want to listen to the benefits of the European Union. Yeah.”

Jim Allister

“Because he is not going to be dragged out of the European Union. I do not know what the question was in the ballot paper he used. But on the ballot paper I used, the question was very clear: do I want the United Kingdom to leave or to stay? The question was never: do you want Northern Ireland to stay? And the only autonomous answer is the answer that came from the entirety of the people of the United Kingdom. Is he going to accept that or is he not?”

Colum Eastwood

“Well, no is the answer, because I stand by people. Because I stand by people on this island. You see, gracious, gracious and xxx as usual. I stand by people on this island, in this country wo do not want to leave the European Union. And one minute, one minute we are told that Northern Ireland is a nation and then the UK is a nation. I am not sure what people are actually trying to tell us, but people in Northern Ireland told us, no I have given away enough. People in Northern Ireland told us that they wanted to remain within the European Union. And we are going to look for every single device possible to make sure that happens and I hope others join with us.

I know all about democracy and some people in here need to learn about democracy. Because I remember a referendum that was held on this island, not all that long ago, where people voted for the Good Friday Agreement. And the member who is shouting from his seat and some of the members across who were shouting from their seats earlier did not recognize that the people of this island voted for the Good Friday Agreement. And what did that Good Friday Agreement, what did that Good Friday Agreement mean: it meant that people from my persuasion who want to see a united Ireland were able to democratically argue for and democratically work towards that goal. We all accept it, that the principle of consent was key to that. Well, let me tell you Mister Speaker, the people of the north of Ireland are not giving their consent to be dragged out of the European Union and we stand by them on that.

And let me just, let me just, let me just, let me just deal with the point of the Secretary of State made about the principle of consent and about the Good Friday Agreement. Whilst I do not think this is the right time for a border poll because I believe we should have a border poll that we can actually win. And our duty today, our duty, our duty, our duty today. Do you not want to hear, no? Our duty today, Mister Speaker, is to deal with the issues that face us right now.

But the Secretary of State has got it wrong when she says that, just because people and the nationalists say, are saying that they agree with the principle of consent and the agreement of the Good Friday Agreement, does not mean that they give consent to our position within the United Kingdom. And we will continue to democratically work towards changing that. Right now, we are not about to be dragged out against our will of the European Union and I think the interest. I would love to hear the DUP explain to me today how you are going to enforce a border on this island, how you are going to control the freedom of movement of people into the British xxx. How are you going to do that? Because I do not think you can.

So, I think you have voted for something that you have not really thought trough. And I think someday, when you look of what has happened in Scotland, when you look at what has happened here, people are beginning to see that the next step is further integration across this island,”

Mister Speaker

“I ask the member to conclude his remarks.”

Colum Eastwood

“... working together with the unionists neighbors, to begin the process of working within the European context for, for delivering for our people here, not to be dragged out against our will by Sunderland or Surrey or anywhere else.”

2. Colum Eastwood MLA – A post-Brexit Ireland: An island united or further divided?

Speaker: Colum Eastwood (speech to the IIEA)

Date: 30/09/2016

Link (video): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZjhUqGyl2t0>

Transcription

“Party disciplines become less of an issue since that fact was released to the public by somebody. Thank you very much for the invitation and for the welcome. It is a real pleasure to be here. Looking down the list of past speakers, I am told that there was a similar crowd here for the head of UN peacekeeping a number of days ago. Hopefully I will not need the services over the afternoon. But it is clear that the Institute has never been short of impact and influence. It is very welcoming though and somewhat inevitable that the period ahead will bring this institute into even greater prominence. Given the signs of the times, I imagine you have a very busy period ahead of you.

Let me begin with where I think we currently stand. The European Union is facing a prolonged and potentially defining crisis. Its foundation and finders are a distant memory to most. The connection has been lost. There is no exaggerating how stark the situation is. The EU’s ethos and perhaps its very survival are now at stake. Stating this reality may well seem obvious, but I think it is an obvious reality we all now face.

This crisis began, did not begin with Brexit and there is no certainty that it will end with Brexit. In truth, the Brexit vote was probably a symptom of a wider problem, rather than its original source. It is instead delayed challenges of globalization, which I believe form the biggest question afflicting the western body politic. Since the financial crisis and crash of 2007, western electorate remain in the depths of uncertainty and vulnerability. Deindustrialization, unstable and insecure labour, the transactional and managerial nature of our public culture and services, the impersonal uniformity of modernity and the ever-increasing distance of political power from the lives of ordinary citizens have all fed into this electoral landscape. The verdict of that electorate has increasingly diagnosed that a more porous world of ever-increasing pace does not necessarily equate to a world of ever-increasing progress. Through their eyes, it has certainly not meant a world of ever-increasing purpose. These sentiments had boiled underneath the radar of popular opinion for some time until now and they can no longer be ignored.

As we have seen on both sides of the Atlantic, visceral politicians spitting ever more visceral language have written that wave of emotion. I believe the heart of the Brexit vote was in large part a reaction to these swirling cultural themes and sentiments. As a result of one of the biggest errors in modern political calculation by the former British Tory Prime Minister David Cameron, the European Union got caught up in that complex cross wind and it bore the brunt of all that anxiety and anger.

For many, the referendum offered the perfect chance to retreat to the imagined comfort of an imagined past. In particular, that is because a reawakened English nation is finding it difficult to define itself in the modern world. The crisis of the English nation has probably been a long time coming and will probably take a long time to resolve. Since the dawn broke on the twenty-fourth of June the British establishment has struggled to react and recover. As has been witnessed to all of us, they are still a long way from finding their feet. So to use that awful modern phrase: we are where we are. Here in this island, north and south, we have watched all

of this unfold before us. However, as we all know, we are far from being an audience to the event. We are all active players. We have plenty skin in the game, to use another awful phrase.

Brexit will affect every institution on these islands, political and civic for many years to come. We are now desperately in need of an Irish solution to a European problem. We should not and must not be bind to the timeline of a largely English crisis. 56 percent of people in Northern Ireland voted to remain in Europe. That is a statistic I believe is worthy of repetition. 56 percent of people in Northern Ireland voted to remain in Europe. It was a decisive democratic decision on the part of people in the north, just as in Scotland ours is not the choice of England or Wales. We have not chosen huge constitutional change and a life outside of Europe. We have chosen to diverge from that future. We have chosen to remain loyal to the European Union's ideas and ideals. There has been ample talk about the potential for seismic economic and social fall-out from Brexit itself. No doubt that will continue and grow if the British government triggers article 50 in the new year. We know the pitfalls that await in terms of trade and free movement.

At the last x, the British government will be required to enter into six separate sets of negotiations. This will bring a new meaning to the phrase long and protracted negotiations. In recent weeks I have been outlining the political dangers and difficulties ahead of us if the British government continues down the road of removing Northern Ireland out of the European Union against her will. It is this political fall-out which needs to be aired much more audibly in the current period. In 1998 we voted on this island to determine, from that moment on, the north would have control over its own destiny and future. It was deliberately designed to ensure that constitutional change could only be enacted if and when given the consent by people in Northern Island. An intrinsic part of that agreement was the European Union. For Northern nationalists in particular, common EU membership with the south of this island with anticipation of deeper integration was a key part of our buy-in into political institutions. The totality of relationships presented to us by Albert Reynolds and John Major on the steps of Downing Street at the start of our political process now faces being ripped apart. The seriousness of that reality should not be understate or undervalued.

As I have said over recent weeks, a post-Brexit world could also mean a post-Good Friday Agreement world. The British government has shown no understanding or even interest in the significance of this reality. Maybe that should be no surprise. The British Conservative Party have a long tradition of displaying a tenure to Irish concerns. It is for this reason that it is now so important for the Irish government to represent the whole Irish voice in the time ahead. The Irish government is a core guarantor to our Good Friday Agreement. At times of change and crisis, they have a responsibility to act as our ultimate insurance policy. It must not be a neutral observer in the coming weeks and months and no calling on the Taoiseach to uphold that responsibility. We are calling in the north insurance policy. We need the Taoiseach and his ministerial colleagues to speak for all Irish citizens, unionists and nationalists alike in the forthcoming negotiation.

In that vein, I warmly welcome the announcement of an all-Ireland Brexit fort which will be established in November. As we know, the First Minister Arlene Foster attempted to politicize this issue earlier in the year. I am pleased that her attempt at veto has failed. And truthful, although it is important that politicians from both sides of the border are involved, it is primarily an opportunity to hear and garner the views of civic society. There is huge anxiety in our business community, in our agri-food sector, in our community and voluntary sectors about the impact of Brexit. This is not solely about a loss of EU-funding, but also about access to markets

and influence across the other member states. If used properly, the forum will be an important vehicle to formulate a coherent and comprehensive response to the challenges we all now face.

I especially welcome this week the progress on our cross-party legal challenge to Brexit which will now proceed to hearing in Belfast High Court next week. After the referendum, we pledged to use every parliamentary legal and political mechanism at our disposal to defend the will of the 56 percent in Northern Ireland who voted to remain in the European Union. The court has now recognized the particular issues for Northern Ireland risk being lost as part of a broader case in London. And that our own circumstances should be judged on their own merits. That principle is at the heart of our challenge. Let me be clear: all of these steps represent a phase process in our opposition to being dragged out of the European Union against our will. They are all measured to design and designed to protect the Irish national interest. Whilst taking immediate steps to tactically fight the trajectory currently being pursued by the British government, Irish nationalism also has a responsibility to plan ahead for the medium and long term.

Any political advisor or observer can see that this is a time of shifting sands. In the last number of years, if the last number of years has taught us anything, that is that political life can no longer afford, can no longer afford to presume the permanence of anything. At the beginning of this speech, I talked about the many challenges of globalization and especially people's increasing sense of loss and alienation from political power. Those issues are not unique to the English nation and it would be a mistake to imagine them as such. Ireland must find its own answers to all of these questions. That will require a replanting of the **sand and ground** and securing people's **rootness** in it. It will also be no surprise to anyone in this room that I firmly believe that those questions are best achieved through a reunited Ireland. That is a debate which now has a renewed momentum. It is vital though that that new momentum is directed in a modern context. We have to be honest with ourselves. Irish nationalism has thus far failed to provide a credible and detailed plan for what a new Ireland would look like. As SDLP leader, I have pledged that my party will now begin that work. That will require putting in the hard yards of policy development and will also require extensive public engagement and persuasion. And doing that work, we must abide by an important principle. A reunified Ireland must also be a reimagined Ireland. And embarking on this journey, Irish nationalism must avoid the trap of putting our tent on old ground. The new blueprint for a new Ireland must be built on a greenfield site. It must not be a process imprisoned by the past.

Let me also say this. I equally believe that Northern unionism must also enter into their own process to determine the constitutional change which awaits. The United Kingdom as unionist note is no more. It cannot credibly continue to defend a disintegrating status quo. As Irish nationalism begins to develop its own vision and plan for the future of this island, I would equally welcome the development of unionism views as to how they see the future evolving. How do they imagine the future of a union particularly when Scotland edges closer and closer to independence? This cannot be a one-way conversation between Irish nationalists. Unionism must involve itself as well.

Although we may not always have the courage to admit it, Northern nationalist and unionists have a lot more in common than we like this so often say. Over the years, one has looked to London and the other to Dublin. With neither always feeling a warm glow of welcome. Apart from the people in this room obviously. We have always been two peoples battling for belonging. The future we now build must map out a pathway where we are all welcomed and comfortable and that new Ireland before us. Friends, the referendum vote in June was a moment

of true change because it was a moment of lasting change. A post-Brexit Ireland is an Ireland we must all know work to ship. It will require us to take control of our own future.

When buying something my grandmother used to say that it was, she was too poor to buy cheap. Hers was a simple but effective formula. When entering into a deal, she would always maintain that she should make sure to buy something of quality which would give you the best possible deal for the long term. She had it well drilled into us. There is a huge amount at stake for this island in the time ahead. There is likely to be plenty of bargaining. All of us will be required to find the best deal possible for our citizens. That will require us to be resolute and if necessary to be stubborn. It will require to defend the single market, defend free movement on this island and defend the constitutional agreements we all signed up into in 1998. We cannot afford anything less. Northern Ireland is too poor to buy cheap. Thank you.”

3. Colum Eastwood: United Ireland 'must provide a place of opportunity and belonging for our unionist neighbours or it simply isn't worth having'

Speaker: Colum Eastwood (SDLP Party Conference)

Date: 7/04/2018

Link (written text): <https://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/northern-ireland/colum-eastwood-united-ireland-must-provide-a-place-of-opportunity-and-belonging-for-our-unionist-neighbours-or-it-simply-isnt-worth-having-36784441.html>

SDLP leader Colum Eastwood has said that any united Ireland must be welcoming to unionists or it is not worth having.

The Foyle MLA was speaking at the SDLP Party Conference at the Titanic Belfast on Saturday.

In a lengthy speech Mr Eastwood said he wasn't interested in talking about the past and outlined his thoughts on Brexit and the best way to return power-sharing to Northern Ireland.

He said that the only way to establish a new Ireland would be one that benefits all the people of the island.

"As we approach the centenary of partition - a triumph for some and a tragedy for others - meaningful reconciliation between the peoples of this island must remain our top priority," he said.

"A new and reconciled Ireland will only ever be built by fully recognising the changing island of today.

"We do not seek a New Ireland because we are victims of an old oppression - we seek a New Ireland because it offers opportunity for all."

"That is the only basis through which it will come to pass.

"The old truism of politics is that people will always opt to vote for something rather than against something.

"If we can't provide a place of opportunity and belonging for our unionist neighbours - then it simply isn't worth having."

Mr Eastwood called on the British and Irish governments to work together to restore devolution in Northern Ireland.

"I can genuinely only see one solution that has any hope of ending the current impasse," the SDLP leader said.

"Too often the mistake is made of believing that our political process is only internal to Northern Ireland.

"In fact, its real underpinning, its real foundation, has always rested on the relationships and agreements between the peoples of Ireland and Britain.

"The guarantors of these agreements are the Irish and British Governments. Together, they represent our ultimate insurance policy.

"The role of guarantor means different things at different times. There is a time for a watching brief and there is a time for facilitation.

"Now is a time for the guarantors to intervene actively and positively.

"If the parties here wouldn't bring the deal over the line – then the two governments should do it for them.

"Since the collapse of the talks I have been calling on the Irish and British Governments, as part of the Intergovernmental Conference, to agree a package of legislation.

"I believe that package should include much of February's draft accommodation.

He said that Northern Ireland would be forced to deal with the consequences of Brexit.

"The driving catalyst for that change and its instability comes from the decision of people in British to leave the European Union," said the SDLP leader," Mr Eastwood said.

Northern Ireland did not consent to that change. Nevertheless, we must deal with it and deal with its consequences.

"Brexit is now the ever-shifting water table beneath our feet – it is unsettling all of the political ground which rests upon it.

"No-one should be in any doubt - the instability of Brexit and the instability faced by the institutions of the Good Friday Agreement are inextricably linked."

Mr Eastwood said Northern Ireland must remain in the single market and the customs union.

"We don't need a new border in Ireland and we don't need a new economic border in the Irish Sea. That was our position during the referendum, after the referendum and it remains our position now. But that position is only possible if both our islands remain in the Single Market and the Customs Union," he said.

"Anything short of these proposals, any hardening of the border, will be a deliberate violation of our political process by the British Government.

"They have no right.

"In Northern Ireland, the Good Friday Agreement is sovereign.

"That Agreement belongs to the people of Ireland and we are only people with the right to change it."

Mr Eastwood said that Northern Ireland had faced similar periods of political uncertainty in the past but had always gotten through them.

"For over a year now, politics has been locked in a cycle of frustration and failure," he told the audience.

"But we should never give up hope – because history tells us that cycles are there to be broken.

"We know this because 20 years ago, the Good Friday Agreement broke the cycle of conflict which had cast a shadow upon the Irish and British relationship for 800 years.

"Now is not the moment to give up on that Agreement – it's the moment to fully embrace it." He said the Good Friday Agreement was still relevant in Northern Ireland today.

"As change engulfs our islands, the three strands of relationships at its heart haven't dated - they have truly come of age," he said in his closing remarks.

"If Good Friday 20 years ago was to be the final destination of slow learners - let us not allow it to fall victim to fast wreckers.

"The choice remains the same.

"The Irish and British peoples across this island can retreat from each other or we can again choose to work, live and govern together.

"In time, when we are forced to look history full in the eye, let us not say that we narrowed our minds and thus narrowed the horizon."

4. Ulster Unionist Party

1. Mike Nesbitt MLA - A Vision for Northern Ireland outside the European Union

Speaker: Mike Nesbitt (at the IIEA's All Island Leaders Lecture Series)

Date: 4/11/2016

Link (video): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KsRLOq1aaVA&t=19s>

Transcription

“Can I thank you very much for the, for the invitation to come and speak to you. One of a letter from, from Tom making clear that some of your speakers in the past include Michail Gorbatsjov, Gordon Brown, Ban Ki-moon, Christine Lagarde. I am fascinated to understand who you are confusing me for, because I am certainly not in that league, but I do appreciate the opportunity to come and say a few words.

Just for a sort of preface, coming to Dublin is always a pleasure for me. One of my earliest memories of coming to Dublin was in the early seventies, going to Santry Stadium

for the Irish School's Athletics Championships. I know it takes a bit of imagination these days, but back then, successful enough to represent Ireland. That year's international event, which was in Scotland. And although I am a unionist leader very proud of my Irishness and I think it feeds into that old John Hewitt sense of an Ulsterman, an Irish, British and a European. And if you deny any part of that, you diminish who I am and indeed proud Irishman like a precaution from, from, from Dublin.

And a more recent visit to Dublin was earlier this year when we went to the Royal Irish Academy as the Ulster Unionist Party to bring on an event as part of our contribution to the centenary of Easter 1916. And I stand to be corrected, because we only thought of it as we were actually setting up our stall on the day, but somebody said are we the first unionists to actually put on an event in Dublin since the 1920? And nobody has been able to say: you are not, which is quite shocking to me, but also reflects something else that I feel about unionism? And it was very well summarized in a conversation I had in Belfast some years ago with a former American ambassador to Dublin. And when we established that I was not a career politician and that he was not a career diplomat, we decided we were engaged in some plain speaking and his home truth to me was the problem with unionism is that your PR is crap.

And I have to say it is very hard to disagree because I think if you look back over the years unionism was not been good at engaging and explaining its position. And if you do not explain your position, you cannot expect somebody else to do it for you. And there is little point for example over the decades in accusing various American administrations of being green when you have never given them the unionist perspective as, as the **counter point**.

So on that basis, I am very pleased to accept the invitation to be here today. Tom cleverly pinned me down to a title and an abstract and shamelessly I choose my title, the title of our initial document on Brexit.

You are probably aware that the First and Deputy First Ministers wrote a letter to Prime Minister May on the tenth of August about Brexit. It identified five areas of concern and I have no difficulty with, with those areas. They are valid areas of concern with a border, trade and access to labour, energy, EU funding and agri-food. The difficulty I have was, that was the tenth of August, but those issues were as plain on the fifth of April or May or June as they were in August and they did not go on to offer any solutions, any pathways or any vision.

So, what we have tried to do in this document is provide a kind of framework made up of three things: a vision for how Northern Ireland might prosper or benefit in a post-Brexit era. The kind

of strategy that we need to put in place yesterday to make sure that we benefit out of the negotiations. And then what we call ten key asks, in other words ten developments or action points which could be used to measure how successful we have been at the end of those negotiations.

So, in terms of the vision, we look to the border and the whole conversation seems to be negative at the moment and about whether we need gatekeepers and if so how many and in what way, rather than focusing on the fact that there is a gate and how we keep that gate open to best effect. It is to become a border between the United Kingdom and the European Union post-Brexit and that means, to my mind, Northern Ireland has the opportunity to become the UK's gateway to the European Union. I cannot tell you in huge detail how that works because we have to know whether we are doing it in the context of access to the single market, whether we are in the customs union or what vision the Prime Minister has for the whole of the United Kingdom beyond Brexit.

The second thing was the strategy and here I am astonished to discover that there has been practically no contingency planning by the Northern Ireland Executive. I had to say what I thought about the civil service. I thought it could not be that somebody like Malcolm McKibben would not have done something. And as we were to discover a few weeks ago under the freedom of information request, he had asked the various departments the contingency plan ahead of 22 June, but the document was never completed and the First Minister claims she never saw. We subsequently heard that the Department of Agriculture had been xxx lines to people manning their telephone helpline to be used on 24 June, but all the lines that were given out to be used in response to queries were predicated on a remain vote. And it was only earlier on the 24th that somebody started feeding lines that reflected the fact that the UK had voted to come out. So, there was very, very little contingency planning.

We need to move on from that. And what I believe the Executive needs to do now is in the first instance put together the intellectual capacity and resource to look at the policy options, define what our preferences and priorities are. And then critically try and assess whether those priorities complement the UK's or clash with them. And it seems to me inevitably there will be classes in priorities and where there are those will be very serious. For example, agriculture is a much more important sector to the Northern Ireland economy, than agriculture is deemed to be by the London government.

So Ms May and her team may decide, in the fullness of time, it is a really good idea to do some sort of trade deal for South American beef. As I understand that South America can produce quality beef, they can do it with welfare guarantees of a reasonable standard to satisfy most people in the United Kingdom. And they can do it at about forty percent less cost than people up here at the moment. So in that basis, Ms May may decide that that is a really good deal, but it xxx the beef sector and not just Northern Ireland's. It could do tremendous damage to yours and we have already seen what has happened to mushroom farmers here in the Republic of Ireland. So, knowing when the priorities clash is absolutely critical. But we have not even identified the priorities in any great detail at the moment. And the intellectual capacity exists, but it is not in the right place. It is not up the hill at Stormont Castle or indeed in Parliament buildings, it is in gatherings like this on both sides of the border. And I have a fear that the two big parties of the Executive in Northern Ireland instinctively like to xxx very, very close and will not consult in an open way as I would like to say to other people: you probably know things that we do not so you tell us and we will use that knowledge to inform our strategy going forward on these issues.

About three weeks ago, David Stirling, permanent secretary of the Department of Finance stood in for Malcolm McKibben and coming to the Committee of the Executive's office to talk about what was happening behind the scenes. And as part of his evidence, he said when Chancellor, when the Chancellor announced initially that any application for EU funding that was signed off by the Autumn Statement was guaranteed, they had done a risk assessment and determined that around one billion euro of Northern Ireland applications for EU funding were at risk. And then when Philip Hammond went to his Conservative Party conference and said at the table we have got to be a bit more generous, the risk dropped from a billion euro to under a hundred million euro, more than a ninety percent swing. In one sentence of one speech.

My concern is that we are not monitoring **in a live sense** these developments, because the next sentence in the next speech may be equally dramatic, but it may be the opposite of what Mr Hammond did. It could be as bad as that was good for us. Are we able to monitor in lifetime and then do we have the communication channels to say to the right people: hey that is disastrous for us. And that is not just a matter of having a communications channels from Belfast to London, we also need a communication channel from Belfast to Dublin. Because of the remaining EU members, nobody is in any doubt that Ireland will be our best friend and potentially our biggest advocates and they will be on the other side of the negotiating table. So it is absolutely critical, I think, that our Executive engages. And you may be looking at me and saying: yeah but you did not bother coming down two days ago for the big conversation, but there were reasons for that. And I would just **assure** you that yesterday, I sat with a delegation of Ulster Unionists and Taoiseach and Charlie Flanagan, the Minister of Foreign Affairs. We had a very good initial discussion. I am not sure they were entirely aware that we had already committed initial thoughts at some detail in this document, but they took it away and we will continue that dialogue in the coming weeks and months. Because we recognize the mutual interest in trying to identify the threats, to mitigate them and trying to find and then maximize any opportunities that exist.

In terms of the third thing that the **ten** asks, you know if there is all this money, these billions of sterling being repatriated, then I think Northern Ireland needs to use this moment as an opportunity to say we have changed our political thinking, we are no longer coming to you with a begging bowl because we have run out of cash for welfare or for this or for that. But actually, we are taking a longer term strategic view of how do we make Northern Ireland a much more attractive proposition for investors, indigenous and foreign direct, because we want to be less dependent. Some politicians in Northern Ireland seem to be very comfortable with the fact that we are dependent to the **xxx** or by **xxx** ten billion sterling **xxx**, but I am not. I would like us to aspire to be where we were a hundred years ago, when that corner of Ireland was basically a net contributor to the treasury. We will not get back there because we have got a health service and we have got state pensions. But the aspiration, the effort would be transformational in our society.

So rather than take a begging bowl approach because we have got short-term monetary cash flow problems, what I would like us to do is **to fit** for two things out of the ten particularly which would transform us as an economy. One is infrastructure and the other is a step change in skills. If you look at our infrastructure it is not good. You used European money for infrastructure, we tended not to. And within infrastructure as well as the roads and all the rest, our biggest concern is energy. Not just the cost and we are I think the second highest for energy costs in Western Europe, but supply, the security of supply is in great danger to the point where it is not sensational to say that some residents of Northern Ireland will celebrate our centenary in 2021 by candlelight. We are getting to the stage where there is an existential threat to the

supply across the whole of Northern Ireland. So, infrastructure is critical and skills also. Just yesterday I was talking to the son of one of our most successful entrepreneurs. He was now selling out and looking like he is going to be a very successful entrepreneur in his own way. It is an engineering company about ten, twelve miles out of Belfast and yet in terms of his compliment of engineers, the one who is closest to Belfast is from Poland. The rest are from even further east in Europe. So, there is a terrible mismatch between skills and education and what the labor market is looking for.

So, we need to look at all these issues: let us say there is 10 asks, I will not rehearse all of them. The other big economic one is to take Northern Ireland and turn it into an enterprise zone. And if you look internationally at things like rates relief and any incentives to reinvest, there are actions, there are clear actions you can take. Whether they would work in the Northern Ireland context again depends on what Ms May wants out of the negotiations. Because if we are in the single market and we have got the four freedoms, then that means certain things cannot be done. Because there will be state aid, but if we are not in the European single market, if we are not in the customs union then other things may be possible.

Working with the Dublin government, I think, is critical because if we only go for the one channel into London, we are closing off very valuable communications channels and we are not maximizing our friendship with yourselves here in the Irish Republic.

So I am, I suppose my final thought is a little concern that the two parties of the Executive were going to drive this now and try and exclude the parties of opposition. And I do not think that is a good idea because this is more important than anything we have faced since devolution was restored in 1998. And the parties of the opposition have the same problem as the parties of the Northern Ireland Executive: 141 against leaving the European Union. And I think having the four heads thinking through these issues is probably better than just having the two.

But those are my, kind of my initial thoughts and I am more than happy to listen to your questions and your comments. Thank you for listening.”

2. Special status will put us on the fringes of the Union –

Kinahan Speaker: Danny Kinahan

Date: 16/05/2017

Link (written text): <https://uup.org/news/4983/21/Special-status-will-put-us-on-the-fringes-of-the-Union-Kinahan#.Wt8e4i-iHq0>

- Days of ‘Brexiters’ and ‘Remainers’ are over
- Special status will damage local economy
- We will leave the EU as one United Kingdom

Ulster Unionist Westminster candidate for South Antrim, Danny Kinahan has said that ‘special status’ for Northern Ireland within the EU risks putting Northern Ireland on the fringes of the Union.

Danny Kinahan said:

“Since the referendum my Party has been very clear, the days of ‘Remainers’ and ‘Brexiters’ are over. The decision has been made, we are leaving the European Union.

“While some parties are putting forward the idea of ‘special status’, this will only create barriers with the rest of the United Kingdom, and risks putting Northern Ireland on the fringes of the Union.

“Trade with Great Britain accounts for 60 percent of Northern Ireland external sales and far exceeds trade with the European Union. Any sort of ‘special status’ arrangement would place unnecessary restrictions with our largest trading partner.

“Likewise ‘special status’ for Northern Ireland would mean immigration controls between Northern Ireland and Great Britain. Northern Ireland citizens should not be reduced to second class status within the Union, and we will oppose any internal borders within the United Kingdom.

“It is no surprise that Sinn Fein are attempting to use ‘special status’ as a guise to break up the Union, however the Belfast Agreement made clear that Northern Ireland remains an integral part of the United Kingdom until the majority of its people say otherwise. Placing a de-facto border along the Irish Sea risks breaching this Agreement.

“The efforts of all parties would be best served trying to achieve the best deal for Northern Ireland as part of the United Kingdom, rather than attempting to block Brexit by the back door. This means getting a deal that works for our businesses, our universities, our farmers, our community & voluntary sector and for our environment.

“In 1973 we joined the EEC as one United Kingdom, and we will leave the European Union as one United Kingdom.”

ENDS

3. Irish Foreign Minister special status comments ‘unhelpful’ -

Swann Speaker: Robin Swann

Date: 22/06/2017

Link (written text): <https://uup.org/news/5050/21/Irish-Foreign-Minister-special-status-comments-unhelpful-Swann#.Wt8LdC-iHq0>

Ulster Unionist Leader Robin Swann, has said that comments from the Irish Foreign Minister Simon Coveney, that the Irish Government is seeking special status for Northern Ireland after Brexit, are unhelpful.

Robin Swann MLA said:

“There is no doubting that Northern Ireland has unique needs in the Brexit debate. Since the referendum result Ulster Unionists have been pro-active in making the case both in London and Brussels, so that the issues impacting Northern Ireland are on the agenda for negotiations between the United Kingdom and the EU.

“We have also been clear that so-called ‘special status’ for Northern Ireland within the EU, would lead to immigration controls for Northern Ireland citizens when they travel to other parts of the United Kingdom, and would create barriers with our largest trading partner, Great Britain. We are totally opposed to creating a border up the middle of the Irish Sea.

“It is disappointing that the new Irish Foreign Minister, has echoed the calls from Sinn Fein and others for ‘special status’, which are a thinly veiled attempt to break up the Union. As the Belfast Agreement makes clear, Northern Ireland is an integral part of the United Kingdom until its people say otherwise. Special status would undermine the principle of consent enshrined in the Agreement.

“With the Republic of Ireland’s economy intrinsically linked to that of the United Kingdom, perhaps Minister Coveney would be better served seeking special arrangements for his country after Brexit, which may be one way to overcome some of the challenges which Brexit presents.

“The future relationship between Northern Ireland and the European Union will be determined by the UK Government and political representatives from Northern Ireland.”

ENDS

4. Attempts to move border to Irish Sea would pull Belfast Agreement asunder – Jim Nicholson MEP

Speaker: Jim Nicholson

Date: 28/07/2017

Link (written text): https://uup.org/news/5098/21/Attempts-to-move-border-to-Irish-Sea-would-pull-Belfast-Agreement-asunder-Jim-Nicholson-MEP#_Wt8KYy-iHq0

- Border up the middle of Irish Sea totally unacceptable
- Irish Government needs to make public statement on their position

Jim Nicholson MEP said:

“I have been warning of the dangers that calls for special status would see the border move to the middle of the Irish Sea. The Ulster Unionist Party has been clear from the outset that this would be totally unacceptable and is not a policy that should be pursued by anyone.

“The Irish Government need to make a very clear public statement on their position regarding border arrangements post-Brexit. If this is their position, then it causes a major threat to the Belfast Agreement and would pull it asunder. Such an arrangement would totally undermine the principle of consent.

“Any attempt to move the border into the middle of the Irish Sea is unhelpful, unwanted and unworkable. If this is the policy that Mr Coveney is pursuing, then he needs to pull his horns in.”

5. I will not allow anyone to use Brexit to break up the United Kingdom –

Nicholson Speaker: Jim Nicholson

Date: 3/10/2017

Link (written text): <https://uup.org/news/5190/21/I-will-not-allow-anyone-to-use-Brexit-to-break-up-the-United-Kingdom-Nicholson#.Wt8hgi-iHq0>

Ulster Unionist MEP Jim Nicholson has called on MEPs to reject any attempt to use Brexit to weaken the constitutional integrity of the United Kingdom.

The European Parliament today (Tuesday) debated a resolution on the state of play of Brexit negotiations, which included text suggesting Northern Ireland remains in the single market and customs union, even if the rest of the UK remains outside both.

Mr Nicholson described the proposal as “essentially calling for an international border to be placed between Northern Ireland and the rest of the United Kingdom” and warned MEPs that they risk turning their back on decades of good relations with all communities in Northern Ireland.

Speaking after the debate, Mr Nicholson said:

“For decades, during some very dark times, Europe was a friend to Northern Ireland, without taking a side.

“I will always remember at the time of the ceasefires of 1994, I met with Jacques Delors along with my 2 other MEP colleagues from Northern Ireland. This resulted in the establishment of the PEACE programmes, which by 2020 will have brought over €2billion in funds for Northern Ireland and the border region of the Republic of Ireland.

“However, from the text on the border proposed by the Parliament it is clear to me that Europe is now taking a side on Northern Ireland.

“By calling for Northern Ireland to remain in the Single Market and Customs Union, with the rest of the United Kingdom outside, Mr Verhofstadt is essentially calling for an international border to be placed between Northern Ireland and the rest of the United Kingdom.

“I will not accept any attempt by anyone in the European Parliament, the corridors of the European Commission or anywhere else to use Brexit as an excuse to break up our country.

“The Belfast Agreement - which the European Parliament and Member States have pledged to defend in these negotiations - is very clear. Northern Ireland is a full part of the United Kingdom.

“We entered the then EEC as one United Kingdom, and we will leave the European Union as one United Kingdom.

“This is a sad day for me. By backing this text, it feels as though Europe is turning its back on decades of good relations with all communities in Northern Ireland. That is a huge mistake.”

6. Northern Ireland is not a bargaining chip

Speaker: Robin Swann (opinion piece The Guardian)

Date: 5/12/2017

Link (written text): <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2017/dec/05/northern-ireland-bargaining-chip-unionists-eu-border>

It should have been obvious to anyone that Northern Ireland's unionists would never accept an EU plan drawing a border through the Irish Sea

- *Robin Swann is leader of the Ulster Unionist party*

Much has been said and written about the events of Monday in which an anticipated deal between the UK government and the EU failed to materialise at the eleventh hour. It could accurately be described as an unedifying shambles.

The so-called “draft text” began to emerge on Monday morning, which was the cause of some alarm for unionists due to its clear indication that Northern Ireland would remain in the customs union and single market along with the Republic of Ireland, while Great Britain would not.

With regard to yesterday's failure, many questions remain as to who knew what and when, but one thing is very clear – whoever thought that the proposals were acceptable to the unionist population of Northern Ireland and throughout the United Kingdom, clearly had no understanding of unionists or unionism.

As unionists we want to play a full and constructive role in the life of the nation. Our position as an integral part of the United Kingdom is something we value and cherish.

Our commitment to the union could not be shaken by a 30-year terrorist onslaught and it was the Ulster Unionist party that took risks for peace in the Belfast agreement in 1998. My colleagues, such as Lord Empey, were key architects of that agreement and therefore when they speak about it, they do so with some authority. As Lord Empey has made clear, Europe was barely mentioned during the negotiations and was certainly not central to the agreement.

While the Ulster Unionist party advocated remaining within the EU, once the UK as a whole voted to leave, we were very clear as to what had to happen next. We are democrats.

There can be no separate arrangements for Northern Ireland, which is exactly what would have been introduced via a commitment to “no regulatory divergence” across the island of Ireland after Brexit or “continued regulatory alignment” between Northern Ireland and the Republic.

This would effectively introduce a border up the Irish Sea and would be nothing less than an attack on UK sovereignty and would run contrary to what many people voted for in the Brexit referendum.

Rather than return sovereignty from Brussels to the UK, yesterday's proposals would have created an internal border within the UK, by ensuring that one part of the UK – Northern Ireland – would still be subject to the rules and regulation set by Brussels, while the rest of the UK would not.

To effectively establish a customs border between Northern Ireland and the rest of the UK is totally unacceptable to unionists whether they once voted leave or remain.

The leaked text would present serious challenges to the economic, constitutional and political integrity of the UK. It would undermine the Belfast agreement, breach the principle of consent and fundamentally alter the relationship between Northern Ireland and Great Britain. No amount of “constructive ambiguity” would cover that up.

Anything that weakens our regulatory regime or means that regulations applicable in Northern Ireland could be set in Dublin or Brussels without consultation, rather than being established in Belfast or Westminster, would be wholly unacceptable. We would be left voiceless and have no say on their design or implementation. It would also mean that if the UK government is negotiating future trade deals across the world, we would be seen as a place apart. What kind of unionist worthy of the name could ever countenance that?

These are not just the comments of those of us from Northern Ireland. The leader of the Scottish Conservatives, Ruth Davidson MSP, said that while she recognised the complexity of the current negotiations, “no government of the Conservative and Unionist party should countenance any deal that compromises the political, economic or social integrity of the United Kingdom.”

She also said that jeopardising the UK’s own internal market “is in no one’s interest”.

You do not have to be a political analyst to see the inherent dangers in a position that facilitates different Brexit deals for different parts of the United Kingdom as comments from Edinburgh, Cardiff and even London have demonstrated.

The Ulster Unionist party is very clear that we need to resolve the current situation. We need to reach a deal whereby the United Kingdom – and that means all of the United Kingdom – secures its departure from the EU on the best terms possible.

Certainly Northern Ireland – which post-Brexit will be the only part of the UK with a land border with the EU – wants to see Brexit negotiations proceed and succeed. While we have no desire to have customs controls placed on our trade with Great Britain, we also recognise the need to ensure that the cross-border trade arrangements with the Republic of Ireland are as seamless as possible.

But everyone should be very clear, whether they are in London, Dublin, Brussels or Belfast.

Northern Ireland’s constitutional position cannot and should not be used as a bargaining chip. The constitutional integrity of the United Kingdom is not up for debate. Instead we should be working together to get the best deal for all the people of the UK. We are indeed stronger together.

7. UUP leader Robin Swann warns Brexit cannot be 'exploited' to achieve a united Ireland

Speaker: Robin Swann (UUP Spring party conference)

Date: 7/04/2018

Link (written text): <https://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/northern-ireland/uup-leader-robin-swann-warns-brexit-cannot-be-exploited-to-achieve-a-united-ireland-36783783.html>

UUP leader Robin Swann has warned that Brexit cannot be exploited to help achieve a united Ireland.

He was speaking during his address at the UUP Spring party conference at the Slieve Donard Hotel in Newcastle, Co Down on Saturday.

The North Antrim MLA said that those who seek to exploit Brexit were acting selfishly.

"For those who think that they can exploit Brexit to pursue a united Ireland – you are not helping the people of Northern Ireland through such a selfish pursuit of your own agenda," he said.

"When Jim Nicholson and I met Michel Barnier and Guy Verhofstat last month our message was clear. Do not, no matter what others tell you, believe that all those Unionists who voted to remain in the EU, would vote to leave the United Kingdom in order to remain in the European Union; because they wouldn't.

"My trip to Strasbourg was very useful. It told me that unionism needs to be doing more to ensure that our message is being communicated fully and effectively across the European Union. There has been no one as dogged as Jim Nicholson in making sure our message is heard loud and clear, and it is now time that everyone who cherishes the union joins him in amplifying it. There must be no doubt in the corridors of Brussels that Northern Ireland cannot be annexed from the rest of the United Kingdom.

Mr Swann called on the Irish government to work with the British government to get the best deal for Northern Ireland.

I have been clear that the outlined "backstop" is unacceptable to unionists. And if they are serious, it should also be unacceptable to those who say they want to defend the integrity of the Belfast Agreement throughout Brexit negotiations – because such an arrangement would totally undermine the principle of consent," he said.

If the Irish Government are serious about not harming the interests of the people of Northern Ireland, then it is up to them to work with – not against – the UK Government in finding solutions that ensure a frictionless border on the island after the United Kingdom exits the EU."

The UUP leader told the audience that he wanted to see more women and young people becoming involved with the UUP to reflect the diverse society currently living in Northern Ireland.

He said his party could continue to hold the DUP to account and resisted any talk of merging unionist parties.

"At our last Conference I spoke about the need for a new Unionism, and the need to promote the values and benefits of the Union. I still believe that we are the only Party that can reach out

and win over converts, and convince others that our Union is a Union worth having," Mr Swann said.

"The union of the United Kingdom supports the rights of free expression, political freedom and the belief that we all have a role to play in building and sustaining civic society. We must make the case for self-assurance and greater confidence in our values and call for renewed efforts to maintain and grow the pro-union perspective that promotes a better and fairer understanding of how we make Northern Ireland work for all.

"I have often been asked why is there not just one unionist Party? Unionism needs the option of an alternative voice, because unionism is not a single homogenous grouping that fits neatly into a box and Unionism needs a conscience – and currently we are that conscience. Indeed, we have always been and will continue to be that conscience and that alternative voice.

"That ties in with my theme of radical moderates – it is up to us to say when others have gone too far or when others are abusing the positions they hold, or when others are being economical with the truth. It is a great responsibility to carry but it is one that this Party is well used to.

"We did so this week when members of the DUP were caught out retweeting anti-muslim tweets and when racist leaflets were distributed in East Belfast.

"Because neither I, nor this Party will stand by and allow unionism to become a byword for intolerance."

Mr Swann also addressed the Good Friday Agreement and the current political impasse at Stormont.

"Members – twenty years ago this Party took a significant step for the sake of people in Northern Ireland, in the Belfast Agreement, in our belief that things needed to change. For those of us who were around at that time, who may not have been on the same page then, I can assure you that I believe we are on the same page now. In holding a belief of what this Party stands for," he told the audience.

"Twenty years on we continue to respect and promote the values of reconciliation, tolerance, partnership, respect and mutual trust that our country needs to progress.

"This coming week we should be remembering our contribution to the Belfast Agreement, an Agreement that has been used as the foundation for peace deals in many other countries and conflicts around the world such as Sudan and Colombia, as a blueprint for how power sharing could work between two communities. We should also be recognising those individuals who took the risks for the greater good of our society, like our Party Chairman Lord Empey, David Trimble, Michael McGimpsey and many others.

"Sadly, the Belfast Agreement was not allowed to evolve and grow with society in the way it was envisaged because there were those who had much to fear from the normalisation of politics here. Twenty years on from 1998 there is little to celebrate when the DUP and Sinn Fein haven't been able to form a Government in the last 14 months, with one of them putting down a seemingly immovable red line of an Irish Language Act.

"Members, in 1998 the protections and support put in place in the Agreement for the Irish Language were meant to take politics out of the language – twenty years on we can see why that was the right approach.

"We are a devolutionist Party; we believe that the best delivery for the people of Northern Ireland is by the direction of locally elected Northern Ireland politicians. When the Assembly started to unravel, our party Chairman, Lord Empey warned others of how easy it was to walk down the steps, but not to underestimate how difficult it would be to get back up them. The current political impasse serves no one.

"In fact, the absence of a local Executive and Ministers is beginning to have a seriously damaging impact. Key decisions are going untaken, reforms are being delayed, money is being wasted, budgets are barely fit for purpose, major pieces of legislation are being steamrolled through Westminster and now civil servants are beginning to take major decisions in the total absence of any accountability."

The UUP leader ended his speech with a challenge to the party faithful.

"It is up to each and every one of us to carry the banner for this party, it is up to each of us to promote the Union and it is up to each of us to sell the message that this Party is the Party that is unashamedly, unapologetically and unrelentingly for the Union," he concluded.